LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

MEN AND WOMEN

AND

SORDELLO

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE

BOSTON
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
New York: 11 East Seventeenth Street
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1883

9538
.N2
1882

Gift of W. H. Smyth

CAMBRIDGE:
PRINTED AT THE RIVERSIDE PRESS.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

PR4214
A1
1883
MAIN

MEN AND WOMEN.

CONTENTS.

	Page
LOVE AMONG THE RUINS	1
A LOVERS' QUARREL	6
EVELYN HOPE	13
UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY. (AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)	16
A WOMAN'S LAST WORD	22
FRA LIPPO LIPPI	25
A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S	39
BY THE FIRESIDE	44
ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND	58
AN EPISTLE CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN	65
MESMERISM	76
A SERENADE AT THE VILLA	83
MY STAR	87
INSTANS TYRANNUS	88
A PRETTY WOMAN	92
"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"	96
RESPECTABILITY	106
A LIGHT WOMAN	108
THE STATUE AND THE BUST	111
LOVE IN A LIFE	124

M101123

	Page
LIFE IN A LOVE	125
HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY	126
THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER	131
THE PATRIOT.—AN OLD STORY	136
MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA	138
BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY	146
MEMORABILIA	183
ANDREA DEL SARTO. (CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER"	184
BEFORE	194
AFTER	197
IN THREE DAYS	198
IN A YEAR	200
OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE	204
IN A BALCONY.—FIRST PART	217
" SECOND PART	231
" THIRD PART	244
SAUL	260
"DE GUSTIBUS—"	284
WOMEN AND ROSES	286
PROTUS	289
HOLY-CROSS DAY. (ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME)	292
THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL: A PICTURE AT FANO	299
CLEON	302
THE TWINS	315
POPULARITY	317
THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY. A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE	321
TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA	326

Page

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL 330
ONE WAY OF LOVE 336
ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE 337
"TRANSCENDENTALISM:" A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS 339
MISCONCEPTIONS 342
ONE WORD MORE. TO E. B. B. . . 343

MEN AND WOMEN.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

1.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop —

2.

Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

3.

Now — the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)

4.

Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be prest,
Twelve abreast.

5.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone —

6.

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;

And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

7.

Now, — the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks —

8.

Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

9.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away —

10.

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there

In the turret, whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal, [dumb
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,
Till I come.

11.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, — and then,
All the men!

12.

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

13.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and north,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force —
Gold, of course.

14.

Oh heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.
Love is best!

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

1.

Oh, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love's away!
I'd as lief that the blue were gray.

2.

Runnels, which rillets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell
With a foamy head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

3.

Dearest, three months ago!
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—

When the wind would edge
In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go —
Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so!

4.

Laughs with so little cause!
We devised games out of straws.
We would try and trace
One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws;
Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws!

5.

What's in the "Times?" — a scold
At the emperor deep and cold;
He has taken a bride
To his gruesome side,
That's as fair as himself is bold:
There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

6.

Fancy the Pampas sheen!
Miles and miles of gold and green
Where the sun-flowers blow
In a solid glow,

And to break now and then the screen —
Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between!

7.

Try, will our table turn?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
Till the yearning slips
Thro' the finger tips
In a fire which a few discern,
And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn.

8.

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck.
'Tis our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
Help in the ocean-space!
Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

9.

See, how she looks now, drest
In a sledging-cap and vest.
'Tis a huge fur cloak —
Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

10.

'Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man!
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

11.

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmeriser Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep,
'Twas a time when the heart could show
All — how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro!

12.

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the Devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe!

13.

Not from the heart beneath —
'Twas a bubble born of breath,

Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

14.

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last,
Me, your own, your you, —
Since, as Truth is true,
I was you all the happy past —
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories we amassed?

15.

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
How I look to you
For the pure and true,
And the beauteous and the right, —
Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threats the white!

16.

What of a hasty word?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
By a worm's pin-prick
Where its roots are quick?

See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred —
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

17.

Foul be the world or fair,
More or less, how can I care?
'Tis the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare —
Oh, it is hard to bear!

18.

Here 's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows;
We shall have the word
In that minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows —
Heaps of the guelder-rose!
I must bear with it, I suppose.

19.

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash —
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

20.

Then, were the world well stript
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped, —
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

21.

Each in the crypt would cry
"But one freezes here! and why?
When a heart as chill
At my own would thrill
Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
Heart, shall we live or die?
The rest, . . . settle it by and by!"

22.

So, she 'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
Just at twelve o'clock
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar —
I shall pull her through the door —
I shall have her for evermore!

EVELYN HOPE

1.

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass.
Little has yet been changed, I think —
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

2.

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name —
It was not her time to love: beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir —
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

3.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew —
And just because I was thrice as old,
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

4.

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love, —
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few —
Much is to learn and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

5.

But the time will come, — at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red —
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

6.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me —
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

7.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while;
My heart seemed full as it could hold —
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile
And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold.
So, hush, — I will give you this leaf to keep —
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
There, that is our secret! go to sleep;
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

1.

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square.
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

2.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

3.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull

Just on a mountain's edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair 's turned wool.

4.

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there 's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry!
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by:
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

5.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:
You 've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive trees.

6.

Is it better in May, I ask you? you've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns!
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell,
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

7.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in the conch — fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash!

8.

All the year long at the villa, nothing 's to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like Death's lean lifted forefinger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

9.

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new play-piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's!

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and
Cicero,
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the skirts
of St. Paul has reached,
Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more
unctuous than ever he preached."
Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! our Lady
borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords
stuck in her heart!
Bang, whang, whang, goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it 's the greatest pleasure
in life.

10.

But bless you, it' s dear — it' s dear! fowls, wine, at
double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil
pays passing the gate
It 's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not
the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers — but still — ah, the
pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with
cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the
yellow candles.

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals.
Bang, *whang*, *whang*, goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

1.

LET 's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep —
All be as before, Love,
— Only sleep!

2.

What so wild as words are?
— I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

3.

See the creature stalking
While we speak —
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek!

4.

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree —

5

Where the apple reddens
Never pry —
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I!

6.

Be a god and hold me
With a charm —
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

7.

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought —

8.

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands!

9.

That shall be to-morrow
  Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
  Out of sight.

10.

— Must a little weep, **Love,**
  — Foolish me!
And so fall asleep, **Love,**
  Loved by thee.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what 's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, it 's past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar.
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do, — harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters? Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off — he 's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
Master — a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
In the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,

How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you.
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face —
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern, — for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ("look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye —
'Tell you I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints

And saints again. I could not paint all night —
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lutestrings, laughs, and whifts of song, —
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since?
Flower o' the thyme — and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter,
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight, — three slim shapes —
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed furniture — a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by St. Laurence, hail fellow, well met, —
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head —

Mine's shaved, — a monk, you say — the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words, there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time, —
"To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce" . . . The mouthful of bread!
thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to — all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing — the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,

And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for" — that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! they tried me with their books.
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, "amo," I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains —
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped, —
How say I? — nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street!
— The soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonitions from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use:
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found nose and eyes and chin for A.s and B.s,
And made a string of pictures of the world

Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks wore black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon they bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, their walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folks at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends, —
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head
Which the intense eyes looked through, came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,

Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers
The brute took growling, prayed, and then was gone.
I painted all, then cried "'tis ask and have —
Choose, for more 's ready!" — laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, (taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies) "that 's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it 's the life!"
But there my triumph 's straw-fire flared and funked —
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How? what 's here?
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it 's devil's-game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there 's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men —
Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . no it 's not . .
It 's vapour done up like a new-born babe —
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It 's . . well, what matters talking, it 's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul.
Here 's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God!

That sets you praising, — why not stop with him?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our heads
With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time.
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She 's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say, —
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off —
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow 's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint — is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there 's beauty with no soul at all —
(I never saw it — put the case the same —)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents, —

That's somewhat. And you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself when you return Him thanks!
"Rub all out!" well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds —
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls —
I'm my own master, paint now as I please —
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front —
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks — the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still — "It's Art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old:
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find:
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer.
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They, with their Latin? so I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them — sometimes do, and sometimes don't,
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn — some warm eve finds me at my saints —

A laugh, a cry, the business of the world —
(*Flower o' the peach,*
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs o'er,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! the old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no —
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
Settled forever one way: as it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught —
I always see the Garden and God there
A-making man's wife — and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterward.
You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now — why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop —

His name is Guidi — he 'll not mind the monks —
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk —
He picks my practice up — he 'll paint apace,
I hope so — though I never live so long,
I know what 's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike —
However, you 're my man, you 've seen the world
— The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises, — and God made it all!
— For what? do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line.
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What 's it all about?
To be passed o'er, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course, you say.
But why not do as well as say, — paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works — paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, " His works
Are here already — nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her — (which you can't)
There 's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark, we 're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted — better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that —

God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank — it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer"
Strikes in the Prior! "when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folks — remember matins —
Or, mind you fast next Friday." Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a St. Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style.
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns —
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves
That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
The pious people have so eased their own
When coming to say prayers there in a rage.
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year.

For pity and religion grow i' the crowd —
Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fool.

— That is — you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
. . . There 's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's . . . (bless the nuns!
They want a cast of my office) I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to church at midsummer.
And then in the front, of course a saint or two —
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these
Secured at their devotions, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light

Music and talking, who but Lippo! I! —
Mazed, motionless and moon-struck — I'm the man!
Back I shrink — what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presencé, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm — "Not so fast!"
— Addresses the celestial presence, "nay —
He made you and devised you, after all,
Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there, draw—
His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!" So, all smile —
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good bye: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back —
Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning. Zooks!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

1.

Oh, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I give you credit, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

2.

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice, where the merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

3.

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the carnival!
I was never out of England — it's as if I saw it all!

4.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

5.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red, —
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head?

6.

Well (and it was graceful of them) they'd break talk off and afford
— She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

7.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions — "Must we die?"

Those commiserating sevenths — "Life might last! we
can but try!"

8.

"Were you happy?" — "Yes." — "And are you still as
happy?" — "Yes — And you?"
— "Then more kisses" —"Did *I* stop them, when a
million seemed so few?"
Hark — the dominant's persistence, till it must be an-
swered to!

9.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you,
I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave
and gay!
I can always leave off talking, when I hear a master
play."

10.

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time,
one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds
as well undone,
Death came tacitly and took them where they never see
the sun.

11.

But when I sit down to reason, — think to take my stand
nor swerve

Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music, till I creep thro' every nerve.

12.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned —
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned!
The soul, doubtless, is immortal — where a soul can be discerned.

13.

"Yours for instance, you know physics, something of geology,
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
Butterflies may dread extinction, — you'll not die, it cannot be!

14.

"As for Venice and its people, merely born to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop.
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

15.

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too — what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

BY THE FIRESIDE.

1.

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark Autumn evenings come,
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

2.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

3.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek —
Now or never, then, out we slip
To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship."

4.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth, as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

5.

The outside-frame like your hazel-trees
But the inside-archway narrows fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

6.

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand —
Oh, woman-country, wooed, not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

7.

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half way up in the Alpine gorge.
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

8.

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Thro' the ravage some torrent brings!

9.

Does it feed the little lake below?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening glow
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

10.

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

11.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain flowers,
And the thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers,
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun
These early November hours —

12.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield, else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

13.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening — nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged
Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky crew
Of toadstools peep indulged.

14.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

15.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish gray and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

16.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams

17.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

18.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, art's early wont —
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt —

19.

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating — good thought of our architect's —
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

20.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times:
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

21.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path gray heads abhor?

22.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops —
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem!

23.

With me, youth led — I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Mutely — my heart knows how —

24.

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without a rebuff
The response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff—

25.

My own, confirm me! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that by its side
Youth seems the waste instead!

26.

My own, see where the years conduct!
At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do: each is sucked
Into each now; on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

27.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new —
When earth breaks up and Heaven expands —
How will the change strike me and you
In the House not made with hands?

28.

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
  Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
  See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the Divine!

29.

But who could have expected this,
  When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
  To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

30.

Come back with me to the first of all,
  Let us lean and love it over again —
Let us now forget and then recall,
  Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall

31.

What did I say? — that a small bird sings
  All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
  Strained to a bell: 'gainst the noonday glare
You count the streaks and rings.

32.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

33.

Hither we walked, then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

34.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

35.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under —
Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! for fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

36.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
  See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date,
  Then cross the bridge we crossed before,
Take the path again — but wait!

37.

Oh moment, one and infinite!
  The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The west is tender, hardly bright.
  How gray at once is the evening grown —
One star, the chrysolite!

38.

We two stood there with never a third,
  But each by each, as each knew well.
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
  The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

39.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
  And the little less, and what worlds away
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
  Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

40.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her.
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends — lovers that might have been.

41.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test.
"Hold the last fast!" says the rhyme.

42.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend!
But a last leaf — fear to touch.

43.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind — (best chance of all!)
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall!

44.

Worth how well, those dark gray eyes,
— That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
And taste a very hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

45.

Oh, you might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

46.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If you join two lives, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

47.

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast.
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life; we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

48.

The forests had done it; there they stood —
We caught for a second the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and for good,
Their work was done — we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

49.

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself — to wit,
By its fruit — the thing it does!

50.

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,
It forwards the General Deed of Man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan,
Each living his own, to boot.

51.

I am named and known by that hour's feat,
There took my station and degree.
So grew my own small life complete
As nature obtained her best of me —
One born to love you, sweet!

52.

And to watch you sink by the fireside now
  Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
  And the spirit-small hand propping it
Yonder, my heart knows how!

53.

So the earth has gained by one man more,
  And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
  When the autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

1.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou
Who art all truth and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say —
Should'st love so truly and could'st love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay!

2.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Would never let mine go, thy heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When should I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

3.

Oh, I should fade — 'tis willed so! might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave

Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
Vainly the flesh fades — soul makes all things new.

4.

And 'twould not be because my eye grew dim
Thou could'st not find the love there, thanks to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

5.

So, how thou would'st be perfect, white and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by!
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Could'st thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

6.

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

7.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

8.

I seem to see! we meet and part: 'tis brief:
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
That is a portrait of me on the wall —
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call;
And for all this, one little hour 's to thank.

9.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me — wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
"Therefore she is immortally my bride,
Chance cannot change that love, nor time impair.

10.

"So, what if in the dusk of life that 's left,
I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,
Look from my path when, mimicking the same,

The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
— Where was it till the sunset? where anon
It will be at the sunrise! what's to blame?"

11.

Is it so helpful to thee? canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream

12.

"— Ah, but the fresher faces! Is it true,"
Thou 'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and new?
Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such wealth?
And if a man would press his lips to lips
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose cup there slips
The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

13.

"It cannot change the love kept still for Her,
Much more than, such a picture to prefer
Passing a day with, to a room's bare side.
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet while the Titian's Venus lies at rest
A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?"

14.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me —
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God see!

15.

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces — disentranced —
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more,
Reissue looks and words from the old mint —
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore!

16.

Recoin thyself and give it them to spend, —
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

17.

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?

Why need the other women know so much
And talk together, "Such the look and such
The smile he used to love with, then as now!"

18.

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I know!

19.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more
By heart each word, too much to learn at first,
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low door-way's lintel. That were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

20.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two.
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task —
Is it to bear? — if easy, I'll not ask —
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

21.

Pride? — when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through! — when I find,
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved. — And yet, it will not be!

Lazarus: A Picture

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE

STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh He hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from His mouth, man's soul)
— To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance, under God,
To baffle it by deftly stopping such: —
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
Three samples of true snake-stone — rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho,
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward —
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy,
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of: there's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back;
Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to?

His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves and give thee all —
Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy —
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar —
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully.
Protesteth his devotion is my price —
Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?
I half resolve to tell thee, (yet I blush,)
What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
For, be it this town's barrenness — or else
The Man had something in the look of him —
His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.
So, pardon if — (lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight — for, wilt thou have the truth?
The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

'Tis but a case of mania — subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days,
When by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed, —
But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered pleased to write
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
Attaineth to erase the fancy-scrawls
Which the returned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.
And first — the man's own firm conviction rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
That he was dead and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
— 'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.
"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment! — not, that such a fume,
Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man — it is one Lazarus a Jew,

Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three days sleep!
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow, — told the case, —
He listened not, except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
And that's a sample how his years must go.
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure, can he use the same
With straightened habits and with tastes starved small,
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
— That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth —
Warily parsimonious, when's no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one.

The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here — we 'll call the treasure knowledge, say —
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty —
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing Heaven.
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds —
'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact — he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness —
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes!
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death, — why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of his daily craft —
While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will start him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like! demand
The reason why — "'tis but a word," object —

A gesture" — he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us, dost thou mind, when being young
We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads from under which ye both
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
He holds on firmly to some thread of life —
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet —
The spiritual life around the earthly life!
The law of that is known to him as this —
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplext with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong across —
And not along — this black thread through the blaze —
"It should be" balked by "here it cannot be."
And oft the man's soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.
Something — a word, a tick of the blood within
Admonishes — then back he sinks at once

To ashes, that was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread —
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the Heavenly will —
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which will restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth:
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
Hence I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be —
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do.
How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
His own conviction? ardent as he is —
Call his great truth a lie, why still the old
"Be it as God please" reassureth him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should —
"How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness
Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.

The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise he loves both old and young,
Able and weak — affects the very brutes
And birds — how say I? flowers of the field —
As a wise workman recognizes tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin —
An indignation which is promptly curbed.
As when in certain travels I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land's practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure — and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object — why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
Conferring with the frankness that befits?
Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused, — our learning's fate, — of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage

That lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people — that 's their wont —
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help —
How could he stop the earthquake? That 's their way!
The other imputations must be lies:
But take one — though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect to any good man's fame!
(And after all our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad — should we count on what he says?
Perhaps not — though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer then,
As — God forgive me — who but God himself,
Creator and Sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
— 'Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith — but why all this of what he saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,

Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth.
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus —
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold, and menacing:
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian — he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine,
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too —
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself.
Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

This is the Problem of Two Days
Does God care?

MESMERISM.

1.

All I believed is true!
I am able yet
All I want to get
By a method as strange as new:
Dare I trust the same to you?

2.

If at night, when doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of smut,
And a cat 's in the water-butt —

3.

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown

Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares —

4.

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
Arms and legs outspread,
On the table's midst descends,
Comes to find, God knows what friends ! —

5.

If since eve drew in, I say,
I have sate and brought
(So to speak) my thought
To bear on the woman away,
Till I felt my hair turn gray —

6.

Till I seemed to have and hold
In the vacancy
'Twixt the wall and me,
From the hair-plait's chestnut-gold
To the foot in its muslin fold —

7.

Have and hold, then and there,
Her, from head to foot,
Breathing and mute,

Passive and yet aware,
In the grasp of my steady stare —

8.

Hold and have, there and then,
All her body and soul
That completes my Whole,
All that women add to men,
In the clutch of my steady ken —

9.

Having and holding, till
I imprint her fast
On the void at last
As the sun does whom he will
By the calotypist's skill —

10.

Then, — if my heart's strength serve,
And through all and each
Of the veils I reach
To her soul and never swerve,
Knitting an iron nerve —

11.

Commanding that to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape

And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance —

12.

I, still with a gesture fit
Of my hands that best
Do my soul's behest,
Pointing the power from it,
While myself do steadfast sit —

13.

Steadfast and still the same
On my object bent
While the hands give vent
To my ardour and my aim
And break into very flame —

14.

Then, I reach, I must believe,
Not her soul in vain,
For to me again
It reaches, and past retrieve
Is wound in the toils I weave —

15.

And must follow as I require,
As befits a thrall,
Bringing flesh and all,

Essence and earth-attire,
To the source of the tractile fire —

16.

Till the house called hers, not mine,
With a growing weight
Seems to suffocate
If she break not its leaden line
And escape from its close confine —

17.

Out of doors into the night!
On to the maze
Of the wild wood-ways,
Not turning to left or right
From the pathway, blind with sight —

18.

Making thro' rain and wind
O'er the broken shrubs,
'Twixt the stems and stubs,
With a still composed strong mind,
Not a care for the world behind —

19.

Swifter and still more swift,
As the crowding peace
Doth to joy increase
In the wide blind eyes uplift,
Thro' the darkness and the drift!

20.

While I — to the shape, I too
Feel my soul dilate
Nor a whit abate
And relax not a gesture due
As I see my belief come true —

21.

For there! have I drawn or no
Life to that lip?
Do my fingers dip
In a flame which again they throw
On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

22.

Ha! was the hair so first?
What, unfilleted,
Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst
Chestnut gold-interspersed!

23.

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
See, on either side,
Her two arms divide
Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
Take me, for I am thine!

24.

Now — now — the door is heard
Hark! the stairs and near —
Nearer — and here —
Now! and at call the third
She enters without a word.

25.

On doth she march and on
To the fancied shape —
It is past escape
Herself, now — the dream is done
And the shadow and she are one.

26.

First I will pray. Do Thou
That ownest the soul,
Yet wilt grant controul
To another nor disallow
For a time. restrain me now!

27.

I admonish me while I may,
Not to squander guilt,
Since require Thou wilt
At my hand its price one day!
What the price is, who can say?

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

1.

That was I, you heard last night
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead, and so was light.

2.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I.

3.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning! — where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

4.

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

5.

So wore night; the east was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock flowers;
Soon would come another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had past away.

6.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you — "When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
Light last on the evening slopes,

7.

"One friend in that path shall be
To secure my steps from wrong;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see."

8.

Never say — as something bodes —
"So the worst has yet a worse!
When life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the task-master's curse
Than such music on the roads!

9.

"When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning went,
Show the final storm begun —

10.

"When the fire-fly hides its spot,
When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot, —
Shall another voice avail,
That shape be where those are not?

11.

"Has some plague a longer lease
Proffering its help uncouth?
Can't one even die in peace?
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
Is that face the last one sees?"

12.

Oh, how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood — the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

MY STAR.

All that I know
Of a certain star,
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue,
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird, — like a flower, hangs furled;
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

Of the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

2.

I struck him, he grovelled of course —
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate —
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As if lots might be worse.

3.

"Were the object less mean, would he stand
At the swing of my hand!
For obscurity helps him and blots
The hole where he squats."
So I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.

All in vain! gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue.
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth —
Still he kept to his filth!

4.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, if I press —
Just a son or a mother to seize —
No such booty as these!
Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself.
No! I could not but smile through my chafe —
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
— Through minuteness, to wit.

5.

Then a humor more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain —
And, no, I admonished myself,

"Is one mocked by an elf,
Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
The gravamen 's in that!
How the lion, who crouches to suit
His back to my foot,
Would admire that I stand in debate!
But the Small is the Great
If it vexes you, — that is the thing!
Toad or rat vex the King?
Though I waste half my realm to unearth
Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

6.

So I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, — with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunders combine
With my under-ground mine:
Till I looked from my labor content
To enjoy the event.

7.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend?"
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across

Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
— So, *I* was afraid!

A PRETTY WOMAN.

1.

That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

2.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

3.

You like us for a glance, you know —
For a word's sake,
Or a sword's sake,
All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

4.

And in turn we make you ours, we say —
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

5.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet —
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet.

6.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar — for you could not, Sweet.

7.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there —
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

8.

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

9.

As, — why must one, for the love forgone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth, — the heaven, we look above for, gone!

10.

Why with beauty, needs there money be —
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey bee?

11.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'Twould undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

12.

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

13.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection —
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

14.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

15.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies! —
A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

16.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose, —
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose.

17.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals, —
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

18.

Then, how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it — at last, throw away!

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME."

(See Edgar's Song in "LEAR.")

1.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee that pursed and scored
Its edge at one more victim gained thereby.

2.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What. save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers that might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

3.

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,

Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed; neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end should be.

4.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring, —
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

5.

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er" he saith,
"And the blow fall'n no grieving can amend")

6.

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves, —
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

7.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band" — to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps — that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now — should I be fit.

8.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

9.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than pausing to throw backward a last view
To the safe road, 'twas gone! gray plain all round
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; nought else remained to do.

10.

So on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers — as well expect a cedar grove!

But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You 'd think: a burr had been a treasure-trove.

11.

No! penury, inertness, and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
Or shut your eyes" — said Nature peevishly —
"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
The Judgment's fire alone can cure this place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

12.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped — the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves — bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

13.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy — thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there —
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

14.

Alive? he might be dead for all I know
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane.
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe:
I never saw a brute I hated so —
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

15.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards — the soldier's art:
One taste of the old times sets all to rights!

16.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas! one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

17.

Giles, then, the soul of honour — there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.

What honest men should dare (he said) he durst.
Good — but the scene shifts — faugh! what hangman's hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? his own hands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

18.

Better this present than a past like that —
Back therefore to my darkening path again.
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

19.

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms —
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof — to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

20.

So, petty yet so spiteful! all along
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

21.

Which, while I forded, — good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
— It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

22.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash? toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a redhot iron cage —

23.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What kept them there, with all the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it: mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

24.

And more than that — a furlong on — why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel — that harrow fit to reel

Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

25.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

26.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came ~~some~~ palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

27.

And just as far as ever from the end!
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought,
To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap — perchance the guide I sought

28.

For looking up, aware I somehow grew
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains — with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stol'n in view.
How thus they had surprised me, — solve it, you!
How to get from them was no plainer case.

29.

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when —
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts — you 're inside the den!

30.

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight —
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
Fool, to be dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for ~~the~~ this sight!

31.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart

In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

32.

Not see? because of night perhaps? — Why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills like giants at a hunting, lay —
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —
"Now stab and end the creature — to the heft!"

33.

Not hear? when noise was everywhere? it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
Of all the lost adventurers my peers, —
How such an one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

34.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides — met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set
And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*"

RESPECTABILITY.

1.

Dear, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
Have recognized your plighted troth,
Am sponsor for you — live in peace!" —
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

2.

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament, —
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevart break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

3.

I know! the world proscribes not love;
Allows my finger to caress
Your lip's contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word! — the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? down the court three lampions flare —
Put forward your best foot!

A LIGHT WOMAN.

1.

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us three? —
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me?

2.

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.

3.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth, for a whim!

4.

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle 's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at the wren instead!

5.

So I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

6.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
— You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

7.

For see — my friend goes shaking and white;
He eyes me as the basilisk:
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

8.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
"Though I love her — that he comprehends —
One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
And be loyal to one's friends!"

9.

And she, — she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear hung basking over a wall;
Just a touch to try and off it came;
'Tis mine, — can I let it fall?

10.

With no mind to eat it, that 's the worst!
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?
'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

11.

And I, — what I seem to my friend, you see —
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess.
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
No hero, I confess.

12.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own.
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone!

13.

One likes to show the truth for the truth;
That the woman was light is very true:
But suppose she says, — never mind that youth —
What wrong have I done to you?

14.

Well, any how, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here 's a subject made to your hand!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

THERE 's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do the townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the furthest window facing the east
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The brides-maids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased —

They felt by its beats her heart expand —
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back — "Who is she?"
— "A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps laid heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure —
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree.

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure —
Which vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, —
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes, —
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

As love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the Palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

(The Duke with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued —

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor —
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the east
She might watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride —
"Your window and its world suffice."
So replied the tongue, while the heart replied —

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on Paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
And I save my soul — but not to-morrow" —

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim) —
"My father tarries to bless my state:
I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know —
We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep.
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'Twas a very funeral
Your lady will think, this feast of ours, —
A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And let Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, "Too much favour for me so mean!

"Alas! my lady leaves the south.
Each wind that comes from the Apennine
Is a menace to her tender youth.

"No way exists, the wise opine,
If she quits her palace twice this year,
To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring —
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself — "Which night shall bring
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool —
Or I am the fool, and thou art his king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool —
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France,
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady's countenance —

"For I ride — what should I do but ride?
And passing her palace, if I list,
May glance at its window — well betide!"

So said, so done : nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth —
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By winter's fruits that supplant the rose :
The world and its ways have a certain worth

And to press a point while these oppose
Were a simple policy — best wait,
And lose no friends and gain no foes.

Meanwhile, worse fates than a lover's fate
Who daily may ride and lean and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she — she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook.

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from it all night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

Weeks grew months, years — gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream.

Which hovered as dreams do, still above, —
But who can take a dream for truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked, —
And wondered who the woman was,
So hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass —
"Summon here," she suddenly said,
"Before the rest of my old self pass,

"Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
Who moulds the clay no love will change,
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

"Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range.

"Make me a face on the window there
Waiting as ever, mute the while,
My love to pass below in the square!

"And let me think that it may beguile
Dreary days which the dead must spend
Down in their darkness under the aisle —

"To say, — 'what matters at the end?
I did no more while my heart was warm,
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.'

"Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
And the blood that blues the inside arm —

Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine?
A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine —

(With, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face —

Eying ever with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever passes by —)

The Duke sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "So, my dream escapes!
Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle fashioner of shapes —
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall work my plan,
Mould me on horseback here aloft,
Alive — (the subtle artisan!)

"In the very square I cross so oft!
That men may admire, when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft

"While the mouth and the brow are brave in bronze —
Admire and say, 'When he was alive,
How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
To listen meanwhile and laugh in my tomb
At indolence which aspires to strive."

So! while these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Surely they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of His,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss —
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had cut his way thro' the world to this.

I hear your reproach — "But delay was best,
For their end was a crime!" — Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view.

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham.
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table 's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as truly, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play — is my principle!
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Was, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a crime, I say.
You of the virtue, (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

LOVE IN A LIFE.

1.

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her,
Next time, herself! — not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew,—
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

2.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune —
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest, — who cares?
But 'tis twilight, you see, — with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

Escape me?
Never —
Beloved!
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear —
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed —
But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up to begin again, —
So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your furthest bound,
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope drops to ground
Than a new one, straight to the selfsame mark,
I shape me —
Ever
Removed!

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life:
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though none did:
The cloak that somewhat shone and showed the threads
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,
Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
That leads no whither; now, they breathed themselves
On the main promenade just at the wrong time.
You 'd come upon his scrutinizing hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
Against the single window spared some house
Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work, —
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks

Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognizance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
If any cursed a woman, he took note;
Yet stared at nobody, — they stared at him;
And found, less to their pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know them and expect as much.
So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,
It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
We had among us, not so much a spy,
As a recording chief-inquisitor,
The town's true master if the town but knew!
We merely kept a Governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account
Of all thought, said, and acted, then went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King,
Who has an itch to know things, He knows why,
And reads them in His bedroom of a night.
Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch,
A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease
As back into your mind the man's look came —
Stricken in years a little, — such a brow

His eyes had to live under! — clear as flint
On either side the formidable nose
Curved, cut, and coloured, like an eagle's claw.
Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?
When altogether old B. disappeared
And young C. got his mistress, — was 't our friend.
His letter to the King, that did it all?
What paid the bloodless man for so much pains?
Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,
And shifts his ministry some once a month;
Our city gets new Governors at whiles, —
But never word or sign, that I could hear.
Notified to this man about the streets
The King's approval of those letters conned
The last thing duly at the dead of night.
Did the man love his office? frowned our Lord,
Exhorting when none heard — "Beseech me not!
Too far above my people, — beneath Me!
I set the watch, — how should the people know?
Forget them, keep Me all the more in mind!"
Was some such understanding 'twixt the Two?

I found no truth in one report at least —
That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
You found he ate his supper in a room
Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
Poor man, he lived another kind of life

In that new, stuccoed, third house by the bridge,
Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise!
The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
(Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
Or treat of radishes in April! nine—
Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
Would point him out to me a dozen times;
"St — St" he 'd whisper, "the Corregidor!"
I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news.
Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
And memorized the miracle in vogue!
He had a great observance from us boys —
I was in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
To have just looked, when this man came to die,
And seen who lined the clean gay garret's sides
And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death

Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
In his old coat, and up to his knees in mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust, —
And now the day was won, relieved at once!
No further show or need for that old coat,
You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while
How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!
A second, and the angels alter that.
Well, I could never write a verse, — could you?
Let 's to the Prado and make the most of time.

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

1.

I SAID — Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all my life seemed meant for, fails,
  Since this was written and needs must be —
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave, — I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
  Your leave for one more last ride with me.

2.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
  With life or death in the balance — Right!
The blood replenished me again:

My last thought was at least not vain.
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

3.

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions — sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once —
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here! —
Thus leant she and lingered — joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

4.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well

She might have hated, — who can tell?
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

5.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought, All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty Done the Undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me. Here we ride.

6.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

7.

What does it all mean, poet? well,
Your brain's beat into rhythm — you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much — but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

8.

And you, great sculptor — so you gave
A score of years to art, her slave,
And that's your Venus — whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you, grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
"But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth — but we ride, in fine.

9.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate

My being; had I signed the bond —
Still one must lead some life beyond,
— Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest —
Earth being so good, would Heaven seem best?
Now, Heaven and she are beyond this ride.

10.

And yet — she has not spoke so long!
What if Heaven be, that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life forever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity, —
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, forever ride?

THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

1.

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad.
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day!

2.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowds and cries.
Had I said, "Good folks, mere noise repels —
But give me your sun from yonder skies!"
They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

3.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun,
To give it my loving friends to keep.
Nought man could do, have I left undone,
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

4.

There 's nobody on the house-tops now —
Just a palsied few at the windows set —
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shambles' Gate — or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

5.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind,
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

6.

Thus I entered Brescia, and thus I go!
In such triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
"Thou, paid by the World, — what dost thou owe
Me?" God might have questioned: but now instead
'Tis God shall requite! I am safer so.

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.

1.

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I've put you so oft —
What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we 're alone in the loft,

2.

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note —
Dead, though, and done with, this many a year —
Let 's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

3.

See, the church empties a-pace.
Fast they extinguish the lights —
Hallo, there, sacristan! five minutes' grace!

Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

4.

See, our huge house of the sounds
Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds
— Oh, you may challenge them, not a response
Get the church saints on their rounds!

5.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
— March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout —

6.

Aloys and Jurien and Just —
Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
Rub the church plate, darn the sacrament lace,
Clear the desk velvet of dust.)

7.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!
Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?

Here's what should strike, — could one handle it
Help the axe, give it a helve! [cunningly.

8.

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

9.

Sure you were wishful to speak,
You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek
Like two great breves as they wrote them of yore
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

10.

Sure you said — "Good, the mere notes!
Still, couldst thou take my intent,
Know what procured me our Company's votes —
Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,
Parted the sheep from the goats!"

11.

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
Quick, ere my candle's a snuff
— Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch —

I believe in you, but that's not enough.
Give my conviction a clinch!

12.

First you deliver your phrase
— Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise —
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways!

13.

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help —
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,
Argument's hot to the close!

14.

One disertates, he is candid —
Two must discept, — has distinguished!
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did:
Four protests, Five makes a dart at the thing wished —
Back to One, goes the case bandied!

15.

One says his say with a difference —.
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance —

Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining —
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

16.

One is incisive, corrosive —
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant —
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive —
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant —
Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

17.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars —
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue ?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars ?

18.

Est fuga, volvitur rota !
On we drift. Where looms the dim port ?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota —
Something is gained, if one caught but the import —
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha !

19.

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All 's like . . . it 's like . . . for an instance I 'm trying . .

There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying!

20

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till one exclaims — "But where's music, the dickens?
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens,
Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

21.

I for man's effort am zealous.
Prove me such censure's unfounded!
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous —
Hopes 'twas for something his organ-pipes sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

22.

Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

23

Over our heads Truth and Nature —
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs weaving a new legislature —

God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath Man's usurpature!

24.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland.
Nothings grow something which quietly closes
Heaven's earnest eye, — not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

25.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,
(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions
Down the past ages must know more than this age!
Leave the web all its dimensions!

26.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf?
Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit — try again — what 's the clef?
'Faith, it 's no trifle for pipe and for tabor —
Four flats — the minor in F.

27.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger.
Learning it once, who would lose it?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger —

Truth 's golden o'er us although we refuse it —
Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her!

28.

Hugues! I advise *meâ pœnâ*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the Full-Organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina.*

29.

While in the roof, if I 'm right there —
. . . Lo, you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket!
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil at end of his cares
At the foot of your rotten-planked rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

No more wine? then we 'll push back chairs and talk.
A final glass for me, tho': cool, i'faith!
We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
It' s different, preaching in basilicas,
And doing duty in some masterpiece
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart!
I doubt if they 're half baked, those chalk rosettes,
Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere;
It 's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh?
These hot long ceremonies of our church
Cost us a little — oh, they pay the price,
You take me — amply pay it! Now, we 'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
No deprecation, — nay, I beg you, sir!
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you know,
I promised, if you 'd watch a dinner out,
We 'd see truth dawn together? — truth that peeps
Over the glass's edge when dinner 's done,
And body gets its sop and holds its noise

And leaves soul free a little. Now 's the time —
'Tis break of day! You do despise me then.
And if I say, "despise me," — never fear —
I know you do not in a certain sense —
Not in my arm-chair for example: here,
I well imagine you respect my place
(Status, *entourage*, worldly circumstance)
Quite to its value — very much indeed
— Are up to the protesting eyes of you
In pride at being seated here for once —
You 'll turn it to such capital account!
When somebody, through years and years to come,
Hints of the bishop, — names me — that 's enough —
"Blougram? I knew him" — (into it you slide)
"Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,
All alone, we two — he 's a clever man —
And after dinner, — why, the wine you know, —
Oh, there was wine, and good! — what with the wine . .
'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!
He 's no bad fellow, Blougram — he had seen
Something of mine he relished — some review —
He 's quite above their humbug in his heart,
Half-said as much, indeed — the thing 's his trade —
I warrant, Blougram 's skeptical at times —
How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!"
Che ch'é, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
Don't you protest now! It 's fair give and take;
You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths —
The hand 's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays —
You do despise me; your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's — you would not be I —
You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte — or, bless me, lower still,
Count D'Orsay, — so you did what you preferred,
Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,
Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
So long as on that point, whate'er it was,
You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself.
— That, my ideal never can include,
Upon that element of truth and worth
Never be based! for say they make me Pope
(They can't — suppose it for our argument)
Why, there I 'm at my tether's end — I 've reached
My height, and not a height which pleases you.
An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It 's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor played Death on a stage
With pasteboard crown, sham orb, and tinselled dart,
And called himself the monarch of the world,
Then going in the tire-room afterward
Because the play was done, to shift himself,
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly
The moment he had shut the closet door
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope
At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just now?
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realized
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realize one jot.
I am much, you are nothing; you would be all
I would be merely much — you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me, — hearken why!
The common problem, your's, mine, every one's,
Is not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be, — but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means — a very different thing!
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,
May lead within a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome or London — not Fool's-paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealize away,
Make Paradise of London if you can,
You 're welcome, nay, you 're wise.

A simile!
We mortals cross the ocean of this world
Each in his average cabin of a life;
The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.
Now for our six months' voyage — how prepare?

You come on shipboard with a landsman's list
Of things he calls convenient — so they are!
An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long;
And little Greek books with the funny type
They get up well at Leipsic fill the next —
Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes!
And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add!
'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow
Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,
Since he more than the others brings with him
Italy's self, — the marvellous Modenese!
Yet 'twas not on your list before, perhaps.
— Alas! friend, here 's the agent . . . is't the name?
The captain, or whoever's master here —
You see him screw his face up; what 's his cry
Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six feet square!"
If you won't understand what six feet mean,
Compute and purchase stores accordingly —
And if in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano and bath, you come on board
Bare — why you cut a figure at the first,
While sympathetic landsmen see you off;
Not afterwards, when, long ere half seas o'er,
You peep up from your utterly naked boards
Into some snug and well-appointed berth
Like mine, for instance (try the cooler jug —

Put back the other, but don't jog the ice)
And mortified you mutter "Well and good —
He sits enjoying his sea-furniture —
'Tis stout and proper, and there 's store of it,
Though I've the better notion, all agree,
Of fitting rooms up! hang the carpenter,
Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances —
I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!"
And meantime you bring nothing: never mind —
You've proved your artist-nature: what you don't,
You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let 's backward to the starting place.
See my way: we 're two college friends, suppose —
Prepare together for our voyage, then,
Each note and check the other in his work, —
Here 's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticize!
What 's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

Why, first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith — and what remains
But say so, like the honest man you are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard,
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now, wait, my friend: well, I do not believe —
If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
(You're wrong — I mean to prove it in due time)
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve —
(To you, and over the wine.) Our dogmas then
With both of us, tho' in unlike degree,
Missing full credence — overboard with them!
I mean to meet you on your own premise —
Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow, and forever, pray?
You 'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think.
In nowise! all we 've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's
The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us? — the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there 's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides, —
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,

Round the ancient idol, on his base again, —
The grand Perhaps! we look on helplessly, —
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are —
This good God, — what he could do, if he would,
Would, if he could — then must have done long since:
If so, when, where, and how? some way must be, —
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?"

— That way
Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it 's indeed a road;
While if he views it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakable! what 's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith, —
And so we stumble at truth's very test?
What have we gained then by our unbelief
But a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt.
We called the chess-board white, — we call it black.

"Well," you rejoin, "the end 's no worse, at least,
We 've reason for both colours on the board.

Why not confess, then, where I drop the faith
And you the doubt, that I 'm as right as you?"

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,
And both things even, — faith and unbelief
Left to a man's choice, — we 'll proceed a step,
Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes — but a cabin-passenger's —
The man made for the special life of the world —
Do you forget him? I remember though!
Consult our ship's conditions and you find
One and but one choice suitable to all,
The choice that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy — they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at its beginning. See the world
Such as it is, — you made it not, nor I;
I mean to take it as it is, — and you
Not so you 'll take it, — though you get nought else.
I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit
In power, peace, pleasantness, and length of days.
I find that positive belief does this
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
— For you, it does, however — that we 'll try!
'Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least

Induce the world to let me peaceably,
Without declaring at the outset, "Friends,
I absolutely and peremptorily
Believe!" — I say faith is my waking life.
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
We know, but waking 's the main point with us,
And my provision 's for life's waking part.
Accordingly, I use heart, head and hands
All day, I build, scheme, study and make friends;
And when night overtakes me, down I lie,
Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,
The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
What 's midnight's doubt before the dayspring's faith?
You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognize the night, give dreams their weight —
To be consistent you should keep your bed,
Abstain from healthy acts that prove you a man,
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!
And certainly at night you 'll sleep and dream,
Live through the day and bustle as you please.
And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
To unbelieve as I to still believe?
Well, and the common sense of the world calls you
Bed-ridden, — and its good things come to me.
Its estimation, which is half the fight,
That 's the first cabin-comfort I secure —
The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye!
Come, come, it 's best believing, if we can —
You can't but own that.

Next, concede again —
If once we choose belief, on all accounts
We can't be too decisive in our faith,
Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
To suit the world which gives us the good things.
In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent;
The world detects him clearly, if he is,
As baffled at the game, and losing life.
He may care little or he may care much
For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,
Since various theories of life and life's
Success are extant which might easily
Comport with either estimate of these,
And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
Because his fellows would choose otherwise.
We let him choose upon his own account
So long as he 's consistent with his choice.
But certain points, left wholly to himself,
When once a man has arbitrated on,
We say he must succeed there or go hang.
Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most
Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need —
For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was.
For nothing can compensate his mistake

On such a point, the man himself being judge —
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now — there 's one great form of Christian faith
I happened to be born in — which to teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
As best and readiest means of living by;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole world —
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe, my friend,
Such as you know me, I am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper one,
Myself, by no immoderate exercise
Of intellect and learning, and the tact
To let external forces work for me,
Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread,
Bid Peter's creed, or, rather, Hildebrand's,
Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
And make my life an ease and joy and pride,
It does so, — which for me 's a great point gained,
Who have a soul and body that exact
A comfortable care in many ways.
There 's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that 's born of fear:
While at the same time, there 's a taste I have,

A toy of soul, a titillating thing,
Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
The naked life is gross till clothed upon:
I must take what men offer, with a grace
As though I would not, could I help it, take!
An uniform to wear though over-rich —
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fashion's sake
And despicable therefore! now men kneel
And kiss my hand — of course the Church's hand.
Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You 'll reply —
So far my choice, no doubt, is a success;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it do all for me I say.

But, friend,
We speak of what is — not of what might be,
And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain enough:
Grant I 'm a beast, why beasts must lead beasts' lives!
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws —
The tailless man exceeds me; but being tailed

I'll lash out lion-fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.
My business is not to remake myself
But make the absolute best of what God made.
Or — our first simile — though you proved me doomed
To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive
To make what use of each were possible;
And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than I need,
And that's no way of holding up the soul —
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools', —
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that?
I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave, — approve in neither case,

Contrast. Rabbi Ben Ezra.

Withhold their voices though I look their way
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence, — what 's its name ?)
While the mad houseful's plaudits near out-bang
His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here —
For even your prime men who appraise their kind
Are men still, catch a thing within a thing,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street
Sixty the minute; what 's to note in that ?
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;
Him you must watch — he 's sure to fall, yet stands !
Our interest 's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demireps
That love and save their souls in new French books —
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They 're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line
Before your sages, — just the men to shrink
From the gross weights, coarse scales, and labels broad
You offer their refinement. Fool or knave ?
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there 's a thousand diamond weights between ?
So I enlist them. Your picked Twelve, you 'll find.

Profess themselves indignant, scandalized
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that 's Schelling's way!
It 's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago
They 'd say, "What 's strange? Blougram of course believes;"
And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."
But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet
How can he?" — All eyes turn with interest.
Whereas, step off the line on either side —
You, for example, clever to a fault,
The rough and ready man that write apace,
Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less —
You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?
Lord So-and-So — his coat bedropt with wax,
All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
Brave with the needlework of Noodledom,
Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares?
But I, the man of sense and learning too,
The able to think yet act, the this, the that,
I, to believe at this late time of day!
Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

— Except it 's yours! admire me as these may,
You don't. But what at least do you admire?
Present your own perfections, your ideal,

Your pattern man for a minute — oh, make haste!
Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?
Concede the means; allow his head and hand,
(A large concession, clever as you are)
Good! — In our common primal element
Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know —
We 're still at that admission, recollect)
Where do you find — apart from, towering-o'er
The secondary temporary aims
Which satisfy the gross tastes you despise —
Where do you find his star? — his crazy trust
God knows through what or in what? it 's alive
And shines and leads him and that 's all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall point
Such ends as his were, and direct the means
Of working out our purpose straight as his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
With after-care to justify the same?
— Be a Napoleon, and yet disbelieve!
Why, the man 's mad, friend, take his light away.
What 's the vague good of the world for which you 'd dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions up?
We neither of us see it! we do see
The blown-up millions — spatter of their brains
And writhing of their bowels and so forth,
In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time!

Can I mistake for some clear word of God
(Which were my ample warrant for it all)
His puff of hazy instincts, idle talk,
"The state, that 's I," quack-nonsense about kings,
And (when one beats the man to his last hold)
The vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his own;
The whole to end that dismallest of ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the church,
And resurrection of the old *régime*.
Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such?
No: for, concede me but the merest chance
Doubt may be wrong — there 's judgment, life to come!
With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right?
This present life is all? you offer me
Its dozen noisy years with not a chance
That wedding an Arch-Duchess, wearing lace,
And getting called by divers new-coined names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!
Therefore, I will not.

Take another case;
Fit up the cabin yet another way.
What say you to the poet's? shall we write
Hamlets, Othellos — make the world our own,
Without a risk to run of either sort?

I can't! — to put the strongest reason first.
"But try," you urge, "the trying shall suffice:
The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life.
Try to be Shakspeare, leave the rest to fate!"
Spare my self-knowledge — there 's no fooling me!
If I prefer remaining my poor self,
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
If I 'm a Shakspeare, let the well alone —
Why should I try to be what now I am?
If I 'm no Shakspeare, as too probable, —
His power and consciousness and self-delight
And all we want in common, shall I find —
Trying forever? while on points of taste
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I
Are dowered alike — I 'll ask you, I or he,
Which in our two lives realizes most?
Much, he imagined — somewhat, I possess.
He had the imagination; stick to that!
Let him say, "In the face of my soul's works
Your world is worthless and I touch it not
Lest I should wrong them" — I withdraw my plea
But does he say so? look upon his life!
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town;
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute;
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
And none more, had he seen its entry once,

Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."
Why then should I who play that personage,
The very Pandulph Shakspeare's fancy made,
Be told that had the poet chanced to start
From where I stand now (some degree like mine
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays?
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best!
Did Shakspeare live, he could but sit at home
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,
And English books, none equal to his own,
Which I read, bound in gold, (he never did.)
— Terni and Naples' bay and Gothard's top —
Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of these —
But, as I pour this claret, there they are —
I've gained them — crossed St. Gothard last July
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that?
We want the same things, Shakspeare and myself,
And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,
Could fancy he too had it when he liked,
But not so thoroughly that if fate allowed
He would not have it also in my sense.
We play one game. I send the ball aloft
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high
Which sends them back to me: I wish and get.

He struck balls higher and with better skill,
But at a poor fence level with his head,
And hit — his Stratford house, a coat of arms,
Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—
While I receive heaven's incense in my nose
And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.
Ask him, if this life 's all, who wins the game?

Believe — and our whole argument breaks up.
Enthusiasm 's the best thing, I repeat;
Only, we can't command it; fire and life
Are all, dead matter 's nothing, we agree:
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
The fact 's the same, — belief's fire once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself.
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron — this turns steel,
That burns to ash — all 's one, fire proves its power
For good or ill, since men call flare success.
But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
Light one in me, I 'll find it food enough!
Why, to be Luther — that 's a life to lead,
Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,
Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
He flared out in the flaring of mankind;
Such Luther's luck was — how shall such be mine?
If he succeeded, nothing 's left to do:

And if he did not altogether — well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be
I might be also. But to what result?
He looks upon no future: Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,
Read the text right, emancipate the world —
The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you — Blougram told it first
It could not owe a farthing, — not to him
More than St. Paul! 'twould press its pay, you think?
Then add there 's still that plaguey hundredth chance
Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run —
For what gain? not for Luther's, who secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,
Supposing death a little altered things!

"Ay, but since really I lack faith," you cry,
"I run the same risk really on all sides,
In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
It 's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
Nor more available to do faith's work
Than unbelief like yours. Whole faith, or none!"

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.
Once own the use of faith, I 'll find you faith.
We 're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.

The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?
By life and man's free will, God gave for that!
To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:
That 's our one act, the previous work 's His own.
You criticize the soil? it reared this tree —
This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!
What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself —
If finally I have a life to show,
The thing I did, brought out in evidence
Against the thing done to me underground
By Hell and all its brood, for aught I know?
I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?
All 's doubt in me; where 's break of faith in this?
It is the idea, the feeling and the love
God means mankind should strive for and show forth,
Whatever be the process to that end,—
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen, sure!
"What think ye of Christ," friend? when all 's done
and said,
You like this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so if it can?
Trust you an instinct silenced long ago

That will break silence and enjoin you love
What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you despise?
If you desire faith — then you 've faith enough.
What else seeks God — nay, what else seek ourselves?
You form a notion of me, we 'll suppose,
On hearsay; it 's a favourable one:
"But still," (you add,) "there was no such good man,
Because of contradictions in the facts.
One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,
This Blougram — yet throughout the tales of him
I see he figures as an Englishman."
Well, the two things are reconcilable
But would I rather you discovered that,
Subjoining — "Still, what matter though they be?
Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed — you know not what you ask!
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.
Some think, Creation 's meant to show him forth:
I say, it 's meant to hide him all it can,
And that 's what all the blessed Evil 's for.
Its use in time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
Against that sight till we can bear its stress.
Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain

And lidless eye and disimprisoned heart
Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth of Him.
But time and earth case-harden us to live;
The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child
Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,
Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
With me, faith means perpetual unbelief
Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.
Or, if that 's too ambitious, — here 's my box —
I need the excitation of a pinch
Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose
Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.
" Leave it in peace " advise the simple folk —
Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
Say I — let doubt occasion still more faith !

You 'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,
In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.
How you 'd exult if I could put you back
Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not,
(Greek endings with the little passing-bell
That signifies some faith 's about to die),
And set you square with Genesis again, —
When such a traveller told you his last news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk

And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!
How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act? As other people felt and did;
With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,
Believe — and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you 'd be!

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man 's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet — both tug —
He 's left, himself, in the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!
Here, we 've got callous to the Virgin's winks
That used to puzzle people wholesomely —
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.
What are the laws of Nature not to bend
If the Church bid them, brother Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception, then —
On to the rack with faith — is my advice!
Will not that hurry us upon our knees
Knocking our breasts, "It can't be — yet it shall!
Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope?
Low things confound the high things!" and so forth.
That 's better than acquitting God with grace
As some folks do. He 's tried — no case is proved,
Philosophy is lenient — He may go!

You 'll say — the old system 's not so obsolete

But men believe still: ay, but who and where?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking? No, he smiles;
Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves.

The sum of all is — yes, my doubt is great,
My faith 's the greater — then my faith 's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can — such points as this!
I won't — that is, I can't throw one away.
Supposing there 's no truth in what I said
About the need of trials to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end,
Clearing off one excrescence to see two;
There 's ever a next in size, now grown as big,

That meets the knife — I cut and cut again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things?
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

You 'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it, you retort.
Your taste's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the difference,
With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule.
We are their lords, or they are free of us
Just as we tighten or relax that hold.
So, other matters equal, we 'll revert
To the first problem — which if solved my way
And thrown into the balance turns the scale —
How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time
How narrowly and grossly I view life,
Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule
The masses, and regard complacently
"The cabin," in our old phrase! Well, I do.

I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
As this world calls for action, life and talk —
No prejudice to what next world may prove,
Whose new laws and requirements my best pledge
To observe then, is that I observe these now,
Doing hereafter what I do meanwhile.
Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyments: well, my friend,
Why lose this life in the mean time, since its use
May be to make the next life more intense?

Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)
Of man's poor spirit in its progress still
Losing true life forever and a day
Through ever trying to be and ever being
In the evolution of successive spheres,
Before its actual sphere and place of life,
Half-way into the next, which having reached,
It shoots with corresponding foolery
Half-way into the next still, on and off!
As when a traveller, bound from north to south,
Scouts fur in Russia — what 's its use in France?
In France spurns flannel — where 's its need in Spain?
In Spain drops cloth — too cumbrous for Algiers!
Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
When, through his journey, was the fool at ease?

I'm at ease now, friend — worldly in this world
I take and like its way of life; I think
My brothers who administer the means
Live better for my comfort — that 's good too;
And God, if he pronounce upon it all,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If He keep silence, — why for you or me
Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times,"
What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue — you declare,
All special-pleading done with, truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it 's better, if we doubt,
To say so, acting up to our truth perceived
However feebly. Do then, — act away!
'Tis there I'm on the watch for you! How one acts
Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:
And how you 'll act is what I fain would see
If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's scheme
As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there 's no higher law that counterchecks.
Put natural religion to the test
You 've just demolished the revealed with — quick,
Down to the root of all that checks your will,
All prohibition to lie, kill, and thieve
Or even to be an atheistic priest!
Suppose a pricking to incontinence —

Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
Whoso embraced a woman in the plain,
Threw club down, and forewent his brains beside,
So stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother-savage club in hand —
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves —
I read this in a French book t'other day.
Does law so analyzed coerce you much?
Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,
But you who reach where the first thread begins,
You 'll soon cut that! — which means you can, but won't
Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out,
You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
But there they are, and so you let them rule.
Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,
A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
Without the good the slave expects to get,
Suppose he has a master after all!
You own your instincts — why what else do I,
Who want, am made for, and must have a God
Ere I can be aught, do aught? — no mere name
Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,
To wit, a relation from that thing to me,
Touching from head to foot — which touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of ours!
I live my life here; yours you dare not live.

Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)

Disfigure such a life and call it names,
While, in your mind, remains another way
For simple men: knowledge and power have rights,
But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth
If here or there or anywhere about —
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we 've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.
Men are not gods, but, properly, are brutes.
Something we may see, all we cannot see —
What need of lying? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most minute
In what I think a man's face — you, mere cloud:
I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,
For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt if there 's a cloud at all.
You take the simpler life — ready to see,
Willing to see — for no cloud 's worth a face —
And leaving quiet what no strength can move,
And which, who bids you move? who has the right?
I bid you; but you are God's sheep, not mine —
"*Pastor est tui Dominus.*" You find
In these the pleasant pastures of this life
Much you may eat without the least offence,
Much you don't eat because your maw objects,
Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,

And thereupon you like your friends so much
You cannot please yourself, offending them —
Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their butts and kicks
And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears
Restrain you — real checks since you find them so —
Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks ;
And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name ?
If so, you beat — which means — you are not I —
Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sward
By those obsequious whethers' very selves.
Look at me, sir ; my age is double yours.
At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
What now I should be — as, permit the word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
We both have minds and bodies much alike.
In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my state ?
You 're young, I 'm old, you must be old one day ;
Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, that cut curls
From your fat lapdog's ears to grace a brooch —
Dukes, that petition just to kiss your ring —

With much beside you know or may conceive?
Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me.
While writing all the same my articles
On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, or Anacreon's Greek.
But you — the highest honour in your life,
The thing you 'll crown yourself with, all your days,
Is — dining here and drinking this last glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part forever. Of your power
And social influence, worldly worth in short,
Judge what 's my estimation by the fact —
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
Hint secrecy on one of all these words!
You 're shrewd and know that should you publish it
The world would brand the lie — my enemies first,
"Who 'd sneer — the bishop 's an arch-hypocrite,
And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool."
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
Before my chaplain who reflects myself —
My shade 's so much more potent than your flesh.
What 's your reward, self-abnegating friend?
Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine —
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,

An artist whose religion is his art,
I should have nothing to object! such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me.
But you, — you 're just as little those as I —
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write statedly for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet — which view you'll print —
Meantime the best you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens, — what 's the name?
"The Slum and Cellar — or Whitechapel life
Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know,
And pleased a month and brought you in ten pounds
— Success I recognize and compliment,
And therefore give you, if you please, three words
(The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)
Which whether here, in Dublin, or New York,
Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,
Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not ours.
Go write your lively sketches — be the first
"Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence" —
Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound."
Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth
As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad
About me on the church-door opposite.
You will not wait for that experience though,

I fancy, howsoever you decide,
To discontinue — not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least — despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
Episcopus, nec non — (the deuce knows what
It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
With Gigadibs the literary man,
Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design
And ranged the olive stones about its edge,
While the great bishop rolled him out his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
The other portion, as he shaped it thus
For argumentatory purposes,
He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed
Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep (it is an old mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these, — not having in readiness

Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
"On the whole," he thought, "I justify myself
On every point where cavillers like this
Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence —
I close — he's worsted, that's enough for him;
He's on the ground! if the ground should break away
I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
His ground was over mine and broke the first.
So let him sit with me this many a year!"

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
(Something had struck him in the "Outward-bound"
Another way than Blougram's purpose was)
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia — there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

MEMORABILIA.

1.

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems, and new!

2.

But you were living before that,
And you are living after,
And the memory I started at —
My starting moves your laughter!

3.

I crossed a moor with a name of its own
And a use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about —

4.

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather —
Well, I forget the rest.

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him, — but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if — forgive now — should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this!

Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, either; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require —
It saves a model. So! keep looking so —
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
— How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet —
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks — no one's: very dear, no less!
You smile? why, there 's my picture ready made.
There 's what we painters call our harmony!
A common grayness silvers every thing, —
All in a twilight, you and I alike
— You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That 's gone you know,) — but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There 's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease
And autumn grows, autumn in every thing.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.

How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead!
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are:
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example — turn your head —
All that's behind us! you don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak;
And that cartoon, the second from the door
— It is the thing, Love! so such things should be —
Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —
Do easily, too — when I say perfectly
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it,
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past —
I do what many dream of all their lives
— Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive — you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,
Yet do much less, so much less, some one says,
(I know his name, no matter) so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.

There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word —
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken — what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered — what of that?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-gray
Placid and perfect with my art — the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain —
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No
doubt.
Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,

Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art — for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put — and there again —
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak! its soul is right,
He means right — that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it.
But all the play, the insight and the stretch —
Out of me! out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think —
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you — oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare —
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo —
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems —
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo?

In this world, who can do a thing, will not —
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat — somewhat, too, the power —
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look, —
One finger on his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
You painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts, —
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?

And had you not grown restless — but I know —
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray —
And I 'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was to have ended there — then if
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that —
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife —"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Angelo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there 's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's! — And indeed the arm is wrong.

I hardly dare — yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here — quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he 's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michael Angelo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,
Is, whether you 're — not grateful — but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more
See, it is settled dusk now; there 's a star;
Morello 's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, Love, — come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you — you, and not with me? Those loans
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?

While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work 's my ware, and what 's it worth?
I 'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The gray remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more — the Virgin's face,
Not your's this time! I want you at my side
To hear them — that is, Michael Angelo —
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand — there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What 's better and what 's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis! it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see

How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures — let him try!
No doubt, there 's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance —
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me
To cover — the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So — still they overcome
Because there 's still Lucrezia, — as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

BEFORE.

1.

Let them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far
God must judge the couple! leave them as they are
— Whichever one 's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt 's with, to my story.

2.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and entoilment?

3.

Which of them 's the culprit, how must he conceive
God 's the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve!
'Tis but decent to profess one's self beneath her.
Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

4.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes,
Then go live his life out! life will try his nerves,
When the sky which noticed all, makes no disclosure
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

5.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing beside there for a warden.

6.

What 's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to his side,
A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious hide?
When will come an end of all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

7.

So much for the culprit. Who 's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can.
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven.

8.

All or nothing, stake it! trusts he God or no?
Thus far and no further? further? be it so.
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents, and saving-clauses.

9.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him

10.

Once more — Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No? — Let go, then — both the fighters to their places —
While I count three, step you back as many paces.

AFTER.

Take the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.
And absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance — both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.
Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold —
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place —
Cover the face.

IN THREE DAYS.

1.

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn —
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine!

2.

Too long, this time of year, the days!
But nights — at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So, life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her! what is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

3.

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent as once before

The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Out-breaking into fairy sparks
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside
Thro' lights and darks how manifold —
The dark inspired, the light controlled!
As early Art embrowned the gold.

4.

What great fear — should one say, "Three days
That change the world, might change as well
Your fortune; and if joy delays,
Be happy that no worse befell."
What small fear — if another says,
"Three days and one short night beside
May throw no shadow on your ways;
But years must teem with change untried,
With chance not easily defied,
With an end somewhere undescried."
No fear! — or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

1.

NEVER any more
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive —
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

2.

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun.
I as little understand
Love's decay.

3.

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sang,
— Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the color sprang,
Then he heard.

4.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed the air I breathed,
Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

5.

"Speak, I love thee best!"
He exclaimed.
"Let thy love my own foretell, —"
I confessed:
"Clasp my heart on thine
Now unblamed,
Since upon thy soul as well
Hangeth mine!"

6.

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth —
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

7.

That was all I meant,
— To be just,
And the passion I had raised
To content.
Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange?

8.

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
— Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
Till, all gone,
He should smile "She never seemed
Mine before.

9.

"What — she felt the while,
Must I think?
Love 's so different with us men,"
He should smile.
"Dying for my sake —
White and pink!
Can't we touch these bubbles then
But they break?"

10.

Dear, the pang is brief.
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure. How perplext
Grows belief!
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart.
Crumble it — and what comes next?
Is it God?

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

1.

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say.
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate, this warm March day,
No flash snapt, no dum thunder rolled
In the valley beneath, where, white and wide,
Washed by the morning's water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

2.

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see,
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

3.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so
Some slights if a certain heart endures
It feels, I would have your fellows know!
'Faith — I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

4.

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curled leaf they never shed)
'Twixt the aloes I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

5.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive —
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;
— With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch —
Its face, set full for the sun to shave.

6.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains!
One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
— A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

7.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit;
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

8.

Much they reck of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls — can they be quit
Of a world where all their work is to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit,
Old Master this and Early the other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,
That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

9.

And here where your praise would yield returns
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there
— Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting (see Vasari ?

10.

There he stands now. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to! so he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and there 's its transit!
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
'Tis looking downward makes one dizzy.

11.

If you knew their work you would deal your dole.
May I take upon me to instruct you ?
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu* —
The truth of Man, as by God first spoken
Which the actual generations garble
Was re-uttered, — and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) were made new in marble.

12.

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be;
And bringing your own shortcomings there,
You grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

13.

You would fain be kinglier, say than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You 'd fain be a model? the Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
You 're wroth — can you slay your snake like Apollo
You 're grieved — still Niobe 's the grander!
You live — there 's the Racers' frieze to follow —
You die — there 's the dying Alexander.

14.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learn — to submit is the worsted's duty.
— When I say "you" 'tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean — the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's own plan.

15.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day,
And cried with a start — What if we so small
Are greater, ay, greater the while than they!
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature!
For time, theirs — ours, for eternity.

16.

To-day's brief passion limits their range,
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect — how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty — why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us — we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

17.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —
The better! what 's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

18.

Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,
And what — is depending on life's one minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
And Man, this step within his endeavour,
His face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized forever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction!

19.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
Replied, "Become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man, — whatever the issue!
Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters.
So bring the invisible full into play,
Let the visible go to the dogs — what matters?"

20.

Give these, I say, full honour and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution
Which if on the earth we intend to acknowledge
Honour them now — (ends my allocution)
Nor confer our degree when the folks leave college

21.

There 's a fancy some lean to and others hate —
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins —
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale 's to be changed, that 's all.

22.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best, [serene,—
And through earth and its noise, what is heaven's
When its faith in the same has stood the test —
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done.
There remaineth a rest for the people of God,
And I have had troubles enough for one.

23.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan;
My painter — who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So now to my special grievance — heigh ho!

24.

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked out, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er
— No getting again what the church has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their chance,
"Works never conceded to England's thick clime!"
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quicklime.)

25.

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking
Where many a lost work breathes though badly —
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, that a captive 's to be out-ferreted?
Why do they never remember me?

26.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
Nor wronged Lippino — and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco —
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

27.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly —
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

28.

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret,
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot?)
No poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding does you but little honour.

29.

They pass: for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish —
Rot or are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English!
Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno
At naked Art, and in ecstacies
Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino!

30.

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it
Never! it shall not be counted true —
That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover, —
Buried so long in oblivion's womb,
Was left for another than I to discover, —
Turns up at last, and to whom? — to whom?

31.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary too!
Nay, I shall have it yet, *detur amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor — or (if that's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye!
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

32.

When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard
Pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,
Have, to begin by way of rejoicing,
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge)
No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

33.

We 'll shoot this time better game and bag 'em hot —
No display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of Witan-agemot
(" Casa Guidi," quod videas ante)
To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's !
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither.

34.

How we shall prologuize, how we shall perorate,
Say fit things upon art and history —
Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery !
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's —
Pure Art's birth being still the republic's !

35.

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan,
Sober, expurgate, spare of an "*issimo,*")
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
Turning the Bell-tower's altaltissimo.
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

36.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire
Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire —
As, "God and the People" plain for its motto,
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto
And Florence together, the first am I!

IN A BALCONY.

FIRST PART.

CONSTANCE *and* NORBERT.

NORBERT.

Now.

CONSTANCE.

Not now.

NORBERT.

Give me them again, those hands —
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through,
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask —
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you.
Some time or other this was to be asked,

Now is the one time — what I ask, I gain —
Let me ask now, Love!

CONSTANCE.

Do, and ruin us.

NORBERT.

Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.
How I do love you! give my love its way!
A man can have but one life and one death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate —
Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you mine,
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,
Hold you and have you, and then die away
If God please, with completion in my soul.

CONSTANCE.

I am not yours then? how content this man?
I am not his, who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,
Give all that was of me away to him
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
Takes part with him against the woman here,
Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
As caring that the world be cognizant
How he loves her and how she worships him.
You have this woman, not as yet that world.
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me

By saving what I cease to care about,
The courtly name and pride of circumstance —
The name you 'll pick up and be cumbered with
Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more ;
Just that the world may slip from under you —
Just that the world may cry " So much for him —
The man predestined to the heap of crowns !
There goes his chance of winning one, at least."

NORBERT.

The world !

CONSTANCE.

You love it. Love me quite as well,
And see if I shall pray for this in vain !
Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks ?

NORBERT.

You pray for — what, in vain ?

CONSTANCE.

Oh my heart's heart,
How I do love you, Norbert ! — that is right !
But listen, or I take my hands away.
You say, " let it be now " — you would go now
And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
You love me — so you do, thank God !

NORBERT.

Thank God

CONSTANCE.

Yes, Norbert, — but you fain would tell your love,
And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
Listening to me. You are the minister,
The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
Made memorable by her life's success,
That junction of two crowns on her sole head
Her house had only dreamed of anciently.
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?
Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?
You are the fate — your minute 's in the heaven.
Next comes the Queen's turn. Name your own reward
With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,
You choose the single thing she will not grant —
The very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralize your work.
At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I 'll let you choose — her cousin's hand?

NORBERT.

Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
The Queen is generous — nay, is just?

CONSTANCE.

There, there
So men make women love them, while they know
No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,
You that are just and generous beside,
Make it your own case. For example now,
I'll say — I let you kiss me and hold my hands —
Why? do you know why? I 'll instruct you, then —
The kiss, because you have a name at court,
This hand and this, that you may shut in each
A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That 's horrible! Apply it to the Queen —
Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak.
"I was a nameless man: you needed me:
Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood
A certain pretty Cousin at your side.
Why did I make such common cause with you?
Access to her had not been easy else.
You give my labours here abundant praise:
'Faith, labour, while she overlooked, grew play.
How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
Give me her hand!"

NORBERT.

And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just? just — generous or no!

CONSTANCE.

Yes, just. You love a rose — no harm in that —

But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom? mine, you said —
Then mine you still must say or else be false.
You told the Queen you served her for herself:
If so, to serve her was to serve yourself
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,
One sees the twenty pictures — there 's a life
Better than life — and yet no life at all;
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,
Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,
Can recognize its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display,
Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit —
And who shall question that she knows them all
In better semblance than the things outside?
Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,
Some lion with the painted lion there —
You think she 'll understand composedly?
— Say, "that 's his fellow in the hunting-piece
Yonder, I 've turned to praise a hundred times?"
Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her —
How should it, with that life in these four walls,

That father and that mother, first to last
No father and no mother — friends, a heap,
Lovers, no lack — a husband in due time,
And every one of them alike a lie!
Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;
All better, all more grandiose than life,
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint
You feel while you admire. How should she feel?
And now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm real struggling love
In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She 'll keep her state untroubled? Here 's the truth —
She 'll apprehend its value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty!
You only have to say "so men are made,
For this they act, the thing has many names
But this the right one — and now, Queen, be just!"
And life slips back — you lose her at the word —
You do not even for amends gain me.
He will not understand oh, Norbert, Norbert,
Do you not understand?

NORBERT.

The Queen 's the Queen,
I am myself — no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window or in the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow.

The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love — what do I want with rule?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life 's good — my soul heard one voice
"The woman yonder, there 's no use of life
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one
And bear them — make a pile of all earth's joys
And spurn them, as they help or help not here;
Only, obtain her!" — How was it to be?
I found she was the cousin of the Queen;
I must then serve the Queen to get to her —
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul
Might gain you, — should I pray the star or no?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,
And did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,
And let me name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be?
Let her wake now. She thinks there was some cause —
The love of power, of fame, pure loyalty?
— Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
Chasing such shades. Then I 've a fancy too.
I worked because I want you with my soul —
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now.

CONSTANCE.

Had I not loved you from the very first,

Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
You might be thus impatient. What 's conceived
Of us without here, by the folks within ?
Where are you now ? immersed in cares of state —
Where am I now ? — intent on festal robes —
We two, embracing under death's spread hand !
What was this thought for, what this scruple of yours
Which broke the council up, to bring about
One minute's meeting in the corridor ?
And then the sudden sleights, long secresies,
The plots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,
" Does she know ? does she not know? saved or lost?"
A year of this compassion's ecstasy
All goes for nothing ? you would give this up
For the old way, the open way, the world's,
His way who beats, and his who sells his wife ?
What tempts you ? their notorious happiness,
That you 're ashamed of ours ? The best you 'll get
Will be, the Queen grants all that you require,
Concedes the cousin, and gets rid of you
And her at once, and gives us ample leave
To live as our five hundred happy friends.
The world will show us with officious hand
Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
When we so oft have stolen across her traps !
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcon's foot,
And make it duty to be bold and swift,

When long ago 'twas nature. Have it so!
He never hawked by rights till flung from fist?
Oh, the man's thought! — no woman 's such a fool.

NORBERT.

Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more—
One made to love you, let the world take note.
Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
By set forms, blinded by forced secresies.
Set free my love, and see what love will do
Shown in my life — what work will spring from that
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives you have named
So good. But let my low ground shame their high.
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!
And love 's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!
I choose to have you stamped all over me,
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me —
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off —
Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,
That now it 's all of me and must have way.
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,

That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,
Trembling at last to its assured result —
Then think of this revulsion. I resume
Life, after death, (it is no less than life
After such long unlovely labouring days)
And liberate to beauty life's great need
Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
Suppress itself erewhile. This eve 's the time —
This eve intense with yon first trembling star
We seem to pant and reach ; scarce aught between
The earth that rises and the heaven that bends —
All nature self-abandoned — every tree
Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts
And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat:
All under God, each measured by itself!
These statues round us, each abrupt, distinct,
The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,
The Muse forever wedded to her lyre,
The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose,
And God's approval on his universe !
Let us do so — aspire to live as these
In harmony with truth, ourselves being true.
Take the first way, and let the second come.
My first is to possess myself of you ;
The music sets the march-step — forward then !
And there 's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
Our flower of life breaks open. No delay !

CONSTANCE.

And so shall we be ruined, both of us.
Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone —
You do not know her, were not born to it,
To feel what she can see or cannot see.
Love, she is generous, — ay, despite your smile,
Generous as you are. For, in that thin frame
Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares,
There lived a lavish soul until it starved
Debarred all healthy food. Look to the soul —
Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
(The true man's way) on justice and your rights,
Exactions and acquittance of the past.
Begin so — see what justice she will deal!
We women hate a debt as men a gift.
Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
Whose business is to sit thro' summer-months
And dole out children's leave to go and play,
Herself superior to such lightness — she
In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic pomp,
To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside —
We wonder such an one looks black on us?
I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
— That were vain truly — none is left to wake —
But, let her think her justice is engaged
To take the shape of tenderness, and mark
If she 'll not coldly do its warmest deed!
Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit.
Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged

To help a kinswoman, she took me up —
Did more on that bare ground than other loves
Would do on greater argument. For me,
I have no equivalent of that cold kind
To pay her with; my love alone to give
If I give any thing. I give her love.
I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace —
Would lay the whole I did to love's account,
Nor yet be very false as courtiers go —
Declare that my success was recompense;
It would be so, in fact: what were it else?
And then, once loosed her generosity
As you will mark it — then, — were I but you
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
And make it give the thing I really take,
Accepting so, in the poor cousin's hand,
All value as the next thing to the queen —
Since none loves her directly, none dares that!
A shadow of a thing, a name's mere echo
Suffices those who miss the name and thing;
You pick up just a ribbon she has worn
To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
Say I 'm so near I seem a piece of her —
Ask for me that way — (oh, you understand)
And find the same gift yielded with a grace,
Which if you make the least show to extort

— You 'll see! and when you have ruined both of us,
Disertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

NORBERT.

Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?
'Tis not my way; I have more hope in truth.
Still, if you won't have truth — why, this indeed,
Is scarcely false, I 'll so express the sense.
Will you remain here?

CONSTANCE.

O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you! then, you take my way?
Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve?
I owe that withered woman every thing —
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part —
Help me to pay her! Stand upon your rights?
You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you?
Your rights are mine — you have no rights but mine.

NORBERT.

Remain here. How you know me!

CONSTANCE.

Ah, but still ——

[*He breaks from her: she remains. Dance-music from within.*

SECOND PART.

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN.

Constance! — She is here as he said. Speak! quick!
Is it so? is it true — or false? One word!

CONSTANCE.

True.

QUEEN.

Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

CONSTANCE.

Madam!

QUEEN.

I love you, Constance, from my soul.
Now say once more, with any words you will,
'Tis true — all true — as true as that I speak.

CONSTANCE.

Why should you doubt it?

QUEEN.

Ah, why doubt? why doubt?
Dear, make me see it. Do you see it so?
None see themselves — another sees them best.
You say "why doubt it?" — you see him and me.
It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith — wherein we fail —
Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;
Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair,
Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,
And so accepting life, abjure ourselves!
Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
And of being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that turf.

CONSTANCE.

Heaven!

QUEEN.

But it was so, Constance, it was so.
Men say — or do men say it? fancies say —
"Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.
Too late — no love for you, too late for love —
Leave love to girls. Be queen — let Constance love!'
One takes the hint — half meets it like a child,
Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.

"Oh, love, true, never think of love again!
I am a queen — I rule, not love, indeed."
So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
Till, — nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

CONSTANCE.

I cannot understand ——

QUEEN.

The happier you!
Constance, I know not how it is with men.
For women, (I am a woman now like you)
There is no good of life but love — but love!
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love —
Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
Never you cheat yourself one instant. Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!
O Constance, how I love you!

CONSTANCE.

I love you.

QUEEN.

I do believe that all is come through you.
I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;
I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered h

Oh, I am very old now, am I not?
Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

CONSTANCE.

Tell it me! let me judge if true or false.

QUEEN.

Ah, but I fear you — you will look at me
And say "she 's old, she 's grown unlovely quite
Who ne'er was beauteous! men want beauty still."
Well, so I feared — the curse! so I felt sure.

CONSTANCE.

Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

QUEEN.

Constance, he came, the coming was not strange —
Do not I stand and see men come and go?
I turned a half-look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble — "one young man the more
He will love some one, — that is nought to me —
What would he with my marble stateliness?"
Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;
The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,
And I still older, with less flesh to change —
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.
It seemed still harder when he first began
Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs

The old way for the old end, interest.
Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts
Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,
Professing they 've no care but for your cause,
Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,
And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred to life,
Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,
First dancer's, gypsy's, or street baladine's !
Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech
Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,
Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,
Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,
While not a man of these broke rank and spoke,
Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.
There have been moments, if the sentinel
Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,
I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

CONSTANCE.

Who could have comprehended!

QUEEN.

Ay, who — who?
Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.
Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps
It comes too late — would you but tell the truth.

CONSTANCE

I wait to tell it.

QUEEN.

Well, you see, he came,
Outfaced the others, did a work this year
Exceeds in value all was ever done
You know — it is not I who say it — all
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)
I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake —
It must have finer aims to spur it on !
I felt, I saw he loved — loved somebody.,
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

CONSTANCE.

Me, madam ?

QUEEN.

It did seem to me your face
Met him where'er he looked : and whom but you
Was such a man to love ? it seemed to me
You saw he loved you, and approved the love,
And that you both were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in the garden, step
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung
And forced to understand. It seemed so true.

So right, so beautiful, so like you both
That all this work should have been done by him
Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last — suppose some night like this —
Borne on to claim his due reward of me
He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so."
And I (O Constance, you shall love me now)
I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
— "And he shall have it. I will make her blest,
My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,
My happiest woman's self that might have been!
These two shall have their joy and leave me here."
Yes — yes —

CONSTANCE.

Thanks!

QUEEN.

And the word was on my lips
When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear
A mere calm statement of his just desire
In payment of his labour. When, O Heaven,
How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes
And thunder in my ears at that first word
Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all —
He loved me — from the first step to the last,
Loved me!

CONSTANCE.

You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke
Of love? what if you should mistake?

QUEEN.

No, no —
No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!
He had not dared to hint the love he felt —
You were my reflex — how I understood!
He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,
And love, love was the end of every phrase.
Love is begun — this much is come to pass,
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours —
I will learn, I will place my life on you,
But teach me how to keep what I have won.
Am I so old? this hair was early gray;
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.
I could sing once too; that was in my youth.
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,
Beautiful — for the last French painter did!
I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank —
I trust you. How I loved you from the first!
Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out
And set her by their side to take the eye:
I must have felt that good would come from you.
I am not generous — like him — like you!
But he is not your lover after all —
It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?
You have not been mistaking words or looks?
He said you were the reflex of myself —
And yet he is not such a paragon
To you, to younger women who may choose

Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!
You know you never named his name to me —
You know, I cannot give him up — ah God.
Not up now, even to you!

CONSTANCE.

Then calm yourself.

QUEEN.

See, I am old — look here, you happy girl,
I will not play the fool, deceive myself;
'Tis all gone — put your cheek beside my cheek —
Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold!
But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best — am *I* not left,
My soul, myself? All women love great men
If young or old — it is in all the tales —
Young beauties love old poets who can love —
Why should not he the poems in my soul,
The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,
The constancy? I throw them at his feet.
Who cares to see the fountain's very shape
And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's
That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?
You could not praise indeed the empty conch;
But I 'll pour floods of love and hide myself.
How I will love him! cannot men love love?
Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!

Well, but men too! at least, they tell you so.
They love so many women in their youth,
And even in age they all love whom they please:
And yet the best of them confide to friends
That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love —
They spend a day with such and tire the next;
They like soul, — well then, they like phantasy,
Novelty even. Let us confess the truth
Horrible though it be — that prejudice,
Prescription . . . Curses! they will love a queen.
They will — they do. And will not, does not — he?

CONSTANCE.

How can he? You are wedded — 'tis a name
We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,
His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled
As you believe and I incline to think,
Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all?

QUEEN.

Hear her! there, there now — could she love like me?
What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace?
See all it does or could do! so, youth loves!
Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do
What I will — you, it was not born in! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the moon.
I 'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
My youth from its enforced calamity,

Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,
His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

CONSTANCE.

You will do — dare do — Pause on what you say!

QUEEN.

Hear her! I thank you, Sweet, for that surprise.
You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine!
I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here.
I think I have borne enough and long enough,
And patiently enough, the world remarks,
To have my own way now, unblamed by all.
It does so happen, I rejoice for it,
This most unhoped-for issue cuts the knot.
There's not a better way of settling claims
Than this; God sends the accident express;
And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now,
Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless God simply, or should almost fear
To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!
How strong I am! could Norbert see me now!

CONSTANCE.

Let me consider. It is all too strange.

QUEEN.

You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me.
You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl,
You will have many lovers, and love one —
Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,
And taller than he is, for you are tall.
Love him like me! give all away to him;
Think never of yourself; throw by your pride,
Hope, fear, — your own good as you saw it once,
And love him simply for his very self.
Remember, I (and what am I to you?)
Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,
Do all but just unlove him! he loves me.

CONSTANCE.

He shall.

QUEEN.

You, step inside my inmost heart.
Give me your own heart — let us have one heart —
I 'll come to you for counsel; "This he says,
This he does, what should this amount to, pray?
Beseech you, change it into current coin.
Is that worth kisses? shall I please him there?"
And then we 'll speak in turn of you — what else?
Your love (according to your beauty's worth)
For you shall have some noble love, all gold —
Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice.

— Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since
I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like yours.
Now, I would face the world with my new life,
With my new crown. I 'll walk around the rooms,
And then come back and tell you how it feels.
How soon a smile of God can change the world!
How we are all made for happiness — how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
True, I have lost so many years. What then?
Many remain — God has been very good.
You, stay here. 'Tis as different from dreams, —
From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!

[*She goes out. Dance-music from within*

PART THIRD.

NORBERT *enters.*

NORBERT.

Well! we have but one minute and one word ——

CONSTANCE.

I am yours, Norbert!

NORBERT.

Yes, mine.

CONSTANCE.

Not till now
You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

NORBERT.

Constance!

CONSTANCE.

Your own! I know the thriftier way
Of giving — haply, 'tis the wiser way.

Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,
With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed, reserve
Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,
My giving and your taking, both our joys
Dying together. Is it the wiser way?
I choose the simpler; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade upon.
Use it, abuse it, — any thing but say
Hereafter, "Had I known she loved me so,
And what my means, I might have thriven with it."
This is your means. I give you all myself.

NORBERT.

I take you and thank God.

CONSTANCE.

Look on through years!
We cannot kiss a second day like this,
Else were this earth, no earth.

NORBERT.

With this day's heat
We shall go on through years of cold.

CONSTANCE.

So best.
I try to see those years — I think I see.

You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back
And lay all to the first glow — not sit down
Forever brooding on a day like this
While seeing the embers whiten and love die.
Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine,
Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

NORBERT.

Just so. I take and know you all at once.
Your soul is disengaged so easily,
Your face is there, I know you; give me time,
Let me be proud and think you shall know me.
My soul is slower: in a life I roll
The minute out in which you condense yours —
The whole slow circle round you I must move,
To be just you. I look to a long life
To decompose this minute, prove its worth.
'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one
Shall show you in the end what fire was crammed
In that mere stone you struck: you could not know,
If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide
Its coldness, were it cold.

CONSTANCE.

But how prove, how?

NORBERT.

Prove in my life, you ask?

CONSTANCE.

Quick, Norbert — how?

NORBERT.

That's easy told. I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.
As with the body — he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike,
So I will seize and use all means to prove
And show this soul of mine you crown as yours,
And justify us both.

CONSTANCE.

Could you write books,
Paint pictures! one sits down in poverty
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

NORBERT.

And loves one's painting and one's writing too,
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,
And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take that face
And write of it and paint it — to what end?
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form

With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised forever? You are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
That cold calm power to see how fair you look.
I come to you — I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there
Paint us.

CONSTANCE.

So best!

NORBERT.

I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathize with life,
With action, power, success: this way is straight.
And days were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt; my craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, inclose,
Manure their barren lives and force the fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe; the task of some one man,
By ways of work appointed by themselves.
I am not bid create, they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that —
But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, my first outbreak here
Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,

The instincts of the heart that teach the head?
What if the people have discerned in me
The dawn of the next nature, the new man
Whose will they venture in the place of theirs
And whom they trust to find them out new ways
To the new heights which yet he only sees?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,
This people — in our phrase, this mass of men —
See how the mass lies passive to my hand
And how my hand is plastic, and you by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first.
My will be on this people! then, the strain,
The grappling of the potter with his clay,
The long uncertain struggle, — the success
In that uprising of the spirit-work,
The vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,
While rounded fair for lower men to see
The Graces in a dance they recognize
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!
So triumph ever shall renew itself;
Ever to end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begun ——

CONSTANCE.

I ever helping?

NORBERT.

Thus!

[*As he embraces her, enter the* QUEEN.

CONSTANCE.

Hist, madam — so I have performed my part.
You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert? a little slow in seeing it!
Begun to end the sooner. What 's a kiss?

NORBERT.

Constance!

CONSTANCE.

Why, must I teach it you again?
You want a witness to your dulness, sir?
What was I saying these ten minutes long?
Then I repeat — when some young handsome man
Like you has acted out a part like yours,
Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,
So very far beyond him, as he says —
So hopelessly in love, that but to speak
Would prove him mad, he thinks judiciously,
And makes some insignificant good soul
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant
And very stalking-horse to cover him
In following after what he dares not face —
When his end 's gained — (sir, do you understand?)
When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,
— May I not say so, madam? — tops his hope,
And overpasses so his wildest dream,
With glad consent of all, and most of her
The confidant who brought the same about —

Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,
I do say that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,
Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!"
Forget it, show his back unmannerly;
But like a liberal heart will rather turn
And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours —
Betwixt the fears and faulterings — we two lived
A chanceful time in waiting for the prize.
The confidant, the Constance, served not ill;
And though I shall forget her in due time,
Her use being answered now, as reason bids,
Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,
Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,
The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,
And the first — which is the last — thankful kiss."

NORBERT.

— Constance? it is a dream — ah see you smile!

CONSTANCE.

So, now his part being properly performed,
Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
As duly — I do justice in my turn.
Yes, madam, he has loved you — long and well —
He could not hope to tell you so — 'twas I
Who served to prove your soul accessible.
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place,
When oft they had wandered out into despair.

And kept love constant toward its natural aim.
Enough — my part is played; you stoop half-way
And meet us royally and spare our fears —
'Tis like yourself — he thanks you, so do I
Take him — with my full heart! my work is praised
By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!
Yourself — the only one on earth who can —
Do all for him, much more than a mere heart
Which though warm is not useful in its warmth
As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that
Around him gently, tenderly. For him —
For him, — he knows his own part.

NORBERT.

Have you done?
I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,
Or did you but accept it? Well — at least,
You lose by it.

CONSTANCE.

Now madam, 'tis your turn.
Restrain him still from speech a little more
And make him happier and more confident!
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet.
Mark, Norbert! do not shrink now! Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!
With her go put in practice the great schemes
You teem with, follow the career else closed —

Be all you cannot be except by her!
Behold her. — Madam, say for pity's sake
Any thing — frankly say you love him. Else
He 'll not believe it: there 's more earnest in
His fear than you conceive — I know the man.

NORBERT.

I know the woman somewhat, and confess
I thought she had jested better — she begins
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait
Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

QUEEN.

Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognize
Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold
Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)
— May still be right: I may do well to speak
And make authentic what appears a dream
To even myself. For, what she says, is true —
Yes, Norbert — what you spoke but now of love,
Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
But justified a warmth felt long before.
Yes, from the first — I loved you, I shall say, —
Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said,
Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak
To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths' toil —
But still I had not waited to discern

Your heart so long, believe me! From the first
The source of so much zeal was almost plain,
In absence even of your own words just now
Which opened out the truth. Tis very strange,
But takes a happy ending — in your love
Which mine meets: be it so — as you choose me,
So I choose you.

NORBERT.

And worthily you choose!
I will not be unworthy your esteem,
No, madam. I do love you; I will meet
Your nature, now I know it; this was well,
I see, — you dare and you are justified:
But none had ventured such experiment,
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,
Less confident of finding it in me.
I like that thus you test me ere you grant
The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best
Of women to my arms! 'tis like yourself!
So — back again into my part's set words —
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
Create in me the love our Constance does.
Or — something truer to the tragic phrase —
Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent
Invites a certain insect — that 's myself —
But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground:
I take this lady!

CONSTANCE.

Stay — not her's, the trap —
Stay, Norbert — that mistake were worst of all.
(He is too cunning, madam!) it was I,
I, Norbert, who . . .

NORBERT.

You, was it, Constance? Then,
But for the grace of this divinest hour
Which gives me you, I should not pardon here.
I am the Queen's: she only knows my brain —
She may experiment therefore on my heart
And I instruct her too by the result;
But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long
Have told my heart-beats over, held my life
In those white hands of yours, — it is not well!

CONSTANCE.

Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?
The life, for her — the heart-beats, for her sake!

NORBERT.

Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test
There 's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, did love prove itself,
I dared insult as you insult me now.
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
" Take back the soul you offer — I keep mine "

But — "Take the soul still quivering on your hand,
The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
And, please you, give it to some friend of mine,
For — what 's the trifle he requites me with?"
I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it succumb?
No! fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,
I would not dare insult a woman so,
Where she the meanest woman in the world,
And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

CONSTANCE.

Norbert!

NORBERT.

I love once as I live but once.
What case is this to think or talk about?
I love you. Would it mend the case at all
Should such a step as this kill love in me?
Your part were done: account to God for it.
But mine — could murdered love get up again,
And kneel to whom you pleased to designate
And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
You did not know this, Constance? now you know
That body and soul have each one life, but one:
And here 's my love, here, living, at your feet.

CONSTANCE.

See the Queen! Norbert — this one more last word —

If thus you have taken jest for earnest — thus
Loved me in earnest . . .

NORBERT.

Ah, no jest holds here!
Where is the laughter in which jests break up?
And what this horror that grows palpable?
Madam — why grasp you thus the balcony?
Have I done ill? Have I not spoken the truth?
How could I other? Was it not your test,
To try me, and what my love for Constance meant?
Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes
A beggar — asks him what would buy his child,
And then approves the expected laugh of scorn
Returned as something noble from the rags.
Speak, Constance, I 'm the beggar! Ha, what 's this?
You two glare each at each like panthers now.
Constance — the world fades; only you stand there!
You did not in to-night's wild whirl of things
Sell me — your soul of souls, for any price?
No — no — 'tis easy to believe in you.
Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still —
Though I should curse, I love you. I am love
And cannot change! love's self is at your feet.

[QUEEN *goes out.*

CONSTANCE.

Feel my heart; let it die against your own.

NORBERT.

Against my own! explain not; let this be.
This is life's height.

CONSTANCE.

Yours! Yours! Yours!

NORBERT.

You and I —
Why care by what meanders we are here
In the centre of the labyrinth? men have died
Trying to find this place out, which we have found.

CONSTANCE.

Found, found!

NORBERT.

Sweet, never fear what she can do —
We are past harm now.

CONSTANCE.

On the breast of God.
I thought of men — as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown!

NORBERT.

This must end here —
It is too perfect!

CONSTANCE.

There 's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread? it is one blaze
About me and within me.

NORBERT.

Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this spark,
And sever us from the rest —

CONSTANCE.

And so do well.
Now the doors open —

NORBERT.

'Tis the guard comes.

CONSTANCE.

Kiss

SAUL.

1.

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer or of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,

And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

2.

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child, with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

3.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second inclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid,

But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness — the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all;—
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, — showed Saul.

4.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side:
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there, — as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change the king-serpent all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time, — so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

5.

Then I tuned my harp, — took off the lilies we twine round its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide — those
sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one
after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door, till folding be
done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they
have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the
stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows
star
Into eve and the blue far above us, — so blue and so far!

6.

— Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will
each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets
elate,
Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what
has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand
house —
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and
half mouse! —
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and
our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family
here.

7.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-
song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and
great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life. — And
then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey — " Bear,
bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! are
balm-seeds not here
To console us? The land has none left, such as he on
the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!" — And
then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage, — first go the young maidens, next,
she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling. — And then,
the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?
— Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned . .
But I stopped here — for here in the darkness, Saul
groaned.

8.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and
listened apart;

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered, — and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start —
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head — but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang, —

9.

" Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! no spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock —
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, — the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, — the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal — the rich dates — yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher; the full draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bull-
rushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and
well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to em-
ploy
All the heart and the soul and the senses, forever in
joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword
thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious
reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as
men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and heard her faint
tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness, "Let one more
attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all
was for best . . ."
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not
much, — but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working
whence grew
Such result as from seething grape-bundles, the spirit
strained true!
And the friends of thy boyhood — that boyhood of won-
der and hope,
Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the
eye's scope,—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is
thine;
And all gifts which the world offers singly, on one head
combine!
On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage,
like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour, and lets the
gold go:
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crown-
ing it, — all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature — King
Saul!"

10.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart, hand, harp
and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding
rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for — as when, dare
I say,
The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains through
its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot — "Saul!" cried I,
and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul,
who hung propt
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by
his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right
to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held, (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate, — leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black but alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold —
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest — all hail, there they are!
Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on its crest
For their food in the ardours of summer! One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled,
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.
What was gone, what remained? all to traverse 'twixt hope and despair —
Death was past, life not come — so he waited. Awhile his right hand

Hell the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should enter: 'twas Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the shore
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean — a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intense: so, arm folded in arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

11.

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him? — Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty! Beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put by?

He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not — he lets me
praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

12.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pastures, when round
me the sheep
Fed in silence — above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in
sleep,
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that
might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the
hill and the sky:
And I laughed — "Since my days are ordained to be
passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least with my fancies, the plains and
the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the
show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall
know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage
that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for.
And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so once
more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus —

13.

"Yea, my king,"
I began — "thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree, — how its stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindedst when these too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect; yet more was to learn,
Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy

More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running! each deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the south and the north
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past.
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.
As the lion when age dims his eye-ball, the rose at her height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty forever take flight.
No! again a long draught of my soul-wine! look forth o'er the years—
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the seer's!

Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale make his tomb —
bid arise
A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square, till built
to the skies.
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers —
whose fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record
shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe, — Such was Saul,
so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace
chid, —
For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there! Which
fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they
shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and
record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story, — the states-
man's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's
a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when
prophet winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their
part
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God
that thou art."

14.

And behold while I sang . . But O Thou who didst grant
me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted, thy help to
essay
Carry on and complete an adventure, — my Shield and
my Sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was
my word, —
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human
endeavour
And scaling the highest man's thought could, gazed hope-
less as ever
On the new stretch of Heaven above me — till, Mighty
to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance — God's
throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending — my voice to my
heart,
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels that
night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my
sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while Hebron up-
heaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and
Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

15.

I say then, — my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him — he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see — the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory, — ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,
And so sat out my singing, — one arm round the tent prop, to raise

His bent head, and the other hung slack — till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all times, to the man patient there,
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power —
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower,
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine —
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
I yearned — "Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
I would add to that life of the past, both the future and this.

Here is the secret of his power

I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
As this moment, — had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!"

16.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more — no song more! outbroke —

17.

"I have gone the whole round of Creation: I saw and I spoke!
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork — returned him again
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.
I report, as a man may of God's work — all's love, yet all's law!
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-drop was asked.
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no more and no less

In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-Complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet!
Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
There 's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift. — Behold! I could love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o 'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain, for love's sake!
— What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appall?

In the least things, have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what Began? —
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection, — succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,

Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now, — and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life, — a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended — who knows? — or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure.
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggle in this.

18.

"I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
All 's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
I will? — the mere atoms despise me! and why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too? why is it I dare

Think but lightly of such impuissance? what stops my despair?
This; — 'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
See the king — I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would — knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect. — Oh, speak through me now!
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou — so wilt Thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost Crown —
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of Being beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek

In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee: a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever! a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

19.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive — the aware —
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news —
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not.
For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported — suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,

Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth —
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' new awe; in the sudden wind thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still
Tho' averted, in wonder and dread; and the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe.
E'en the serpent that slid away silent, — he felt the new Law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved the vine-bowers.
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices — E'en so! it is so.

All's love & all's law

"DE GUSTIBUS—"

1.

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say, —
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the beanflowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

2.

What I love best in all the world,
Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,

(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands) —
In a sea-side house to the farther south,
Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,
And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Without the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea, and not a break?
While, in the house, forever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there 's news to-day — the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.
— She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me —
(When fortune's malice
Lost her, Calais.)
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she;
So it always was, so it still shall be!

WOMEN AND ROSES.

1.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me ?

2.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow the women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

3.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

4.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!

How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh! to possess, and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink once and die! — In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

5.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed;
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

6.

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure!
Girdle me once! But no — in their old measure
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

7.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn,
First streak of a new morn

8.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What 's far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our own flesh moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind! — Alas! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

PROTUS.

Among these latter busts we count by scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast.
One loves a baby face, with violets there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period
Of empery beginning with a god:
Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant;
Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant.
And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire
Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
A fame that he was missing, spread afar —
The world, from its four corners, rose in war,
Till he was borne out on a balcony
To pacify the world when it should see."
The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
Made baby points at, gained the chief command.

And day by day more beautiful he grew
In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child
Were, so, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.
Already sages laboured to condense
In easy tones a life's experience:
And artists took grave counsel to impart
In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art —
To make his graces prompt as blossoming
Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:
Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,
For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
And mortals love the letters of his name."

— Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same
New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
How that same year, on such a month and day.
"John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved
The Empire from its fate the year before, —
Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore
The same for six years, (during which the Huns
Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons
Put something in his liquor" — and so forth.
Then a new reign. Stay — "Take at its just worth
(Subjoins an annotator) "what I give
As hearsay. Some think John let Protus live
And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached man's age
At some blind northern court; made first a page,

Then, tutor to the children — last, of use
About the hunting-stables. I deduce
He wrote the little tract 'On worming dogs,'
Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
Is extant yet. A Protus of the Race
Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace, —
And if the same, he reached senility."

Here 's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great eye
Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can
To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

HOLY-CROSS DAY.

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME.

["Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted, blind, restive, and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now paternally brought — nay, (for He saith, 'Compel them to come in,') haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory." — *Diary by the Bishop's Secretary*, 1600.]

Though what the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect:

1.

Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday 's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,

Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons — 'tis sermon-time.

2.

Boh, here 's Barnabas! Job, that 's you?
Up stumps Solomon — bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
Fair play 's a jewel! leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church

3.

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a stye,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop — here he comes.

4.

Bow, wow, wow — a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

5.

Aaron 's asleep — shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch!
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingumbob.
What 's he at, quotha? reading his text!
Now you 've his curtsey — and what comes next?

6.

See to our converts — you doomed black dozen —
No stealing away — nor cog nor cozen!
You five that were thieves, deserve it fairly;
You seven that were beggars, will live less sparely.
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune — and fortune gets you; mind that!

7.

Give your first groan — compunction 's at work;
And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah, — the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in!
Here 's a knife, clip quick — it 's a sign of grace —
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

8.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at?
I know a point where his text falls pat.

I 'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades —
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

9.

Groan all together now, whee — hee — hee!
It 's a-work, it 's a-work, ah, woe is me!
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist
Jew-brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

10.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to this church like hounds.
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed.
And it overflows, when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

11.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime, —
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

12.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, "This world has been harsh and strange,
Something is wrong, there needeth a change.
But what, or where? at the last, or first?
In one point only we sinned, at worst.

13.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them:
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

14.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place:
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph for evermore?

15.

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep:
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world, — at watch and ward,

Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By his servant Moses the watch was set:
Though near upon cock-crow — we keep it yet.

16.

"Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight naming a dubious Name!
And if we were too heavy with sleep — too rash
With fear — O Thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on thee coming to take thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne —

17.

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the judgment over, join sides with us!
Thine too is the cause! and not more thine
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed!

18.

"We withstood Christ then? be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now!
Was our outrage sore? but the worst we spared,
To have called these — Christians, — had we dared!
Let defiance to them, pay mistrust of thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary!

19.

" By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship,

20.

" We boast our proofs, that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
Thy face took never so deep a shade
But we fought them in it, God our aid!
A trophy to bear, as we march, a band
South, east, and on to the Pleasant Land!"

[*The present Pope abolished this bad business of the sermon.* — R. B.]

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL:

A PICTURE AT FANO.

1.

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

2.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
And suddenly my head be covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb — and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door!

3.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,

For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

4.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

5.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O, world, as God has made it! all is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

6.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend) — that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,— with his own head turned away

Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

7.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
— My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame, (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

8.

And since he did not work so earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong, —
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

CLEON.

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps
"Greece")—
To Protos in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake —
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the east.
The vulgar saw thy tower; thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face —
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard: in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.

That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine, — and also mine the little chaunt,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their nets.
The image of the sun-god on the phare
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;
And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music, — why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognize,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great (beside their simple way)
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point, and no other at a time, —
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way, — not ours, nor meant for ours,
And ours is greater, had we skill to know.
Yet, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements here,
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,

Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analyzed to parts,
But each part having reference to all, —
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done? — Then what 's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid —
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture; there it lies.
So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind — and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.
Or where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men, —
In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now, mark me — those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
And where they reached, who can do more than reach?
It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession: but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch

The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height — and after, void;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in its life —
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other God, descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown
Piecemeal or in succession; — showed, I say,
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all His children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image, — might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to each,
Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere!
This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,
That years and days, the summers and the springs
Follow each other with unwaning powers —
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;

The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers;
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,
Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no —
Nor swept string like Terpander, no — nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend:
I am not great as they are, point by point:
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
The wild flower was the larger — I have dashed
Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large.
I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
It might have fallen to another's hand — what then?
I pass too surely — let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men —

Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life.
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand:
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men. "For" (writest thou)
"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought:
Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
The pictures men shall study; while my life,
Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
Is lost indeed; since, — what survives myself?
The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,
Set on the promontory which I named.
And that — some supple courtier of my heir
Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
I go, then: triumph thou, who dost not go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage —
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which, — had Zeus then questioned thee
"Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,
Do more for visible creatures than is done?"
Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each
Grow conscious in himself — by that alone.
All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,
The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
And slides; the birds take flight, forth range the beasts
Till life's mechanics can no further go —
And all this joy in natural life, is put,
Like fire from off Thy finger into each,
So exquisitely perfect is the same.
But 'tis pure fire — and they mere matter are;
It has them, not they it: and so I choose,
For man, Thy last premeditated work
(If I might add a glory to this scheme)
That a third thing should stand apart from both,
A quality arise within the soul,
Which, intro-active, made to supervise
And feel the force it has, may view itself,
And so be happy." Man might live at first
The animal life: but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,

The more joy-giving will his life become.
The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:
"Let progress end at once, — man make no step
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
Using his senses, not the sense of sense."
In man there's failure, only since he left
The lower and inconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
A spirit might grow conscious of that life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas!
The soul now climbs it just to perish there,
For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream —
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more
Than ere you climbed the tower to look abroad!
Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought
Deduction to it." We struggle — fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,

Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,
It skills not: life 's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange — what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could?
She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread.
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast
" See, man, how happy I live, and despair —
That I may be still happier — for thy use!"
If this were so, we could not thank our Lord,
As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so —
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care — where is the sign, I ask —
And get no answer: and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure! thou sayest well.

The last point now: — thou dost accept a case —
Holding joy not impossible to one

With artist-gifts — to such a man as I —
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living? — Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act —
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?
Methinks I 'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower with the moulded muscles there
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes — thy fair slave 's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too gray
For being beloved: she turns to that young man
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well — thou art king!

" But," sayest thou — (and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee tripping on a mere word) " what

Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not die:
Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"
Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite — drink from thy cup —
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still, —
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
In power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase —
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy —
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over much,
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make sweet the life at large —
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death

We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But, no
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas!
He must have done so — were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die,
Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus — we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him —
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all.
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ,
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

THE TWINS.

"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto-you."

1.

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables — flowers on furze,
The better the uncouther:
Do roses stick like burrs?

2.

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
The Abbot replied, "We 're poor!"

3.

"Poor, who had plenty once,
"When gifts fell thick as rain:
"But they give us nought, for the nonce,
"And how should we give again?"

4.

Then the beggar, "See your sins!
"Of old, unless I err,
"Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
"Date and Dabitur."

5.

"While Date was in good case
"Dabitur flourished too:
"For Dabitur's lenten face,
"No wonder if Date rue."

6.

"Would ye retrieve the one?
"Try and make plump the other!
"When Date's penance is done,
"Dabitur helps his brother."

7.

"Only, beware relapse!"
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be, perhaps,
An angel, Luther said.

POPULARITY.

1.

Stand still, true poet that you are,
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you 'll fail us. When afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star.

2.

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of His which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless He needs you —
Just saves your light to spend?

3.

His clenched Hand shall unclose at last
I know, and let out all the beauty.
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

4.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but Thou
Forever set'st our table praising, —
Keep'st the good wine till now."

5.

Meantime, I 'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder.
I 'll say — a fisher (on the sand
By Tyre the Old) his ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

6.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

7.

And each bystander of them all
Could criticize, and quote tradition;
How depths of blue sublimed some pall,
To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

8.

Yet there 's the dye, — in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live whelks, the lip's-beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

9.

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

10.

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

11.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
Till art comes, — comes to pound and squeeze
And clarify, — refines to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

12.

And there 's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced, and salable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

13.

Hobbs hints blue, — straight he turtle eats.
Nobbs prints blue, — claret crowns his cup.
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats, —
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

(*In the original*) ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius.* AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides.*

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A. D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries. — R. B.)

1.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

THE Lord, we look to once for all,
Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:
He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,
Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
See Him no other than as he is;
Give both the Infinites their due --

Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
As infinite a justice too.

[*Organ: plagal-cadence.*

As infinite a justice too.

2.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,
Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
He sold it to Sultan Saladin —
Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
They bring him now to be burned alive.

[*And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm him who singeth —*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

3.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;
'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
Make a trench all round with the city muck;
Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
Fagots not few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more, —
For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

4.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;
Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:
Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS.

Laus Deo — who bids clap-to the torch.

5.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
Is burning alive in Paris square!
How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?
Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?
Or heave his chest, while a band goes round?
Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?
Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?
— Thinks John — I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[*Here one crosseth himself.*

6.

Jesus Christ — John had bought and sold,
Jesus Christ — John had eaten and drunk;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(Salvâ reverentiâ.)
Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,
I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me.
See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
Art thou a Saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me!

7.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?
— Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird? —
For she too prattles of ugly names.
— Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows?
That God is good and the rest is breath;
Why else is the same styled, Sharon's rose?
Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

8.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
Some honied of taste like your leman's tongue.
Some, bitter — for why? (roast gayly on!)
Their tree struck root in devil's dung!
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
And of temperance and of judgment to come,

Good Felix trembled, he could no less —
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

9.

Ha ha, John plucks now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!
Lo, — petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;
And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

10.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life —
To the Person, he bought and sold again —
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife —
Feature by feature It took its place!
And his voice like a mad dog's choking bark
At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face —
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

1.

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt, since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

2.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

3.

Help me to hold it: first it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

4.

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles, — blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal, — and last
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

5.

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air —
Rome's ghost since her decease.

6.

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting Nature have her way
While Heaven looks from its towers.

7.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above.
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

8.

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more —
Nor yours, nor mine, — nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? what the core
Of the wound, since wound must be?

9.

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs, — your part, my part
In life, for good and ill.

10.

No. I yearn upward — touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth, — I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak —
Then the good minute goes.

11.

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

12.

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern —
Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

[*Time* — Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe.]

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
Each in its tether
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow.
Look out if yonder 's not the day again
Rimming the rock-row!
That 's the appropriate country — there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer!
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop,
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture!
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
Clouds overcome it;

No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit!
Thither our path lies — wind we up the heights —
Wait ye the warning?
Our low life was the level's and the night's;
He 's for the morning!
Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head,
'Ware the beholders!
This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! Sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather!
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo!
Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
Winter would follow?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!
My dance is finished?"
No, that 's the world's way! (keep the mountain-side,
Make for the city.)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity;
Left play for work, and grappled with the world
Bent on escaping:

"What 's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?
Show me their shaping,
Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
Give!" — So he gowned him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page:
Learned, we found him!
Yea, but we found him bald too — eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain:
"Time to taste life," another would have said,
"Up with the curtain!"
This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?
Patience a moment!
Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
Still, there 's the comment.
Let me know all. Prate not of most or least,
Painful or easy:
Even to the crumbs I 'd fain eat up the feast,
Ay, nor feel queasy!"
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to give;
Sooner, he spurned it!
Image the whole, then execute the parts —
Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here 's the town-gate reached: there 's the market-place
Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus)
Still before living he 'd learn how to live —
No end to learning.
Earn the means first — God surely will contrive
Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say — "But time escapes, —
"Live now or never!"
He said, "What 's Time? leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has Forever."
Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head;
Calculus racked him:
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead;
Tussis attacked him
"Now, Master, take a little rest!" — not he!
(Caution redoubled!
Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly.)
Not a whit troubled,
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon
He, (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,
Bad is our bargain!
Was it not great? did he not throw on God,
(He loves the burthen) —
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment!
He ventured neck or nothing — heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure:
"Wilt thou trust death or not?" he answered "Yes.
"Hence with life's pale lure!"
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here — should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplext
Seeking shall find Him.
So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife.
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be! —
Properly based *Oun* —
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.
Hail to your purlieus

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here's the top-peak! the multitude below
Live, for they can there.
This man decided not to Live but Know —
Bury this man there?
Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm —
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,
Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

ONE WAY OF LOVE.

1.

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves,
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

2.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string — fold music's wing.
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

3.

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion. — Heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!
Lose who may — I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they.

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

1.

June was not over,
Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere, —
"If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?"

2.

Well, Dear, in-doors with you!
True, serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
What 's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
Sweetness and redness,
Eadem semper!
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!

If June mends her bowers now, your hand left unsightly
By plucking their roses, — my June will do rightly.

3.

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time, —
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness:
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
To stop the fresh spinning, — why, June will consider.

"TRANSCENDENTALISM:"

A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS.

STOP playing, poet! may a brother speak?
'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art:
Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts
Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.
— True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up!
But why such long prolusion and display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings?
Stark-naked thought is in request enough —
Speak prose and holloa it till Europe hears!
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp —
Exchange our harp for that, — who hinders you?

But here's your fault; grown men want thought, you think;
'hought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse·

Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason — so you aim at men.
Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth, 'tis true,
We see and hear and do not wonder much.
If you could tell us what they mean, indeed!
As Swedish Bœhme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
That day the daisy had an eye indeed —
Colloquised with the cowslip on such themes!
We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.
But by the time youth slips a stage or two
While reading prose in that tough book he wrote,
(Collating, and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our mind)
We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.
Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss —
Another Bœhme with a tougher book
And subtler meanings of what roses say, —
Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,
John, who made things Bœhme wrote thoughts about?
He with a "look you!" vents a brace of rhymes,
And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,
Over us, under, round us every side,
Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs
And musty volumes, Bœhme's book and all, —
Buries us with a glory, young once more,
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again!
You are a poem, though your poem 's naught.
The best of all you did before, believe,
Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer chords
Bent, following the cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-moon wings

MISCONCEPTIONS.

1.

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

2.

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on —
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

ONE WORD MORE.

TO E. B. B.

1.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, Love, the book and me together.
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

2.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view — but One, the volume.
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.
Did she live and love it all her lifetime?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving —
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

3.

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas —
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre —
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

4.

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world with it, "Ours — the treasure!"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

5.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
Let the wretch go festering thro' Florence) —

Dante, who loved well because he hated
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel, —
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he — "Certain people of importance"
(Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to)
Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet
Says the poet — "Then I stopped my painting."

6.

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not? — than read a fresh Inferno

7.

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those "people of importance:"
We and Bice bear the loss forever.

8.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?

9.

This: no artist lives and loves that longs not
Once, and only once, and for One only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —

Using nature that 's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that 's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry, —
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem, —
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for One only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Save the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

10.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked — "Shall smiting help us?"
When they drank and sneered — "A stroke is easy!"
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks — "But drought was pleasant."
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,

Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude —
"How should'st thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel —
"Egypt's flesh-pots — nay, the drought was better"

11.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

12.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

13.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me;

So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing —
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

14.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us —
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once, as I do.

15.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth, — the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
I am mine and yours — the rest be all men's,
Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.

Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence —
Pray you, look on these my men and women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

16.

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, — glad to finish.

17.

What, there 's nothing in the moon note-worthy?
Nay — for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)

She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman —
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats — him, even!
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal —
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better?
Proves she like some portent of an ice-berg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered chrystals!
Proves she as the paved-work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

18.

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure — the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her.

19.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you — yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that 's the world's side — there 's the wonder —
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you,
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

20.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel — borne, see, on my bosom!

SORDELLO.

1840.

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

DEAR FRIEND: —

Let this poem be introduced by your name, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might — instead of what the few must — like: but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so, — you, with many known and unknown to me, think so, — others may one day think so: and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

LONDON, June 9, 1863.

SORDELLO.

BOOK THE FIRST.

A QUIXOTIC ATTEMPT.

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told:
His story? Who believes me shall behold
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out
Sordello, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.
Only believe me. Ye believe?
Appears
Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
A story I could body forth so well
By making speak, myself kept out of view,
The very man as he was wont to do,

And leaving you to say the rest for him.
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim
Abysmal Past divide its hateful surge,
Letting of all men this one man emerge
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,
I should delight in watching first to last
His progress as you watch it, not a whit
More in the secret than yourselves who sit
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,
Makers of quite new men, producing them,
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem,
The wearer's quality; or take their stand,
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,
Summoned together from the world's four ends,
Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,
To hear the story I propose to tell.
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,
Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,
And shaming her; 't is not for fate to choose
Silence or song because she can refuse
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache
Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake:
I have experienced something of her spite;
But there 's a realm wherein she has no right
And I have many lovers. Say, but few
Friends fate accords me? Here they are: now view
The host I muster! Many a lighted face

Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace;
What else should tempt them back to taste our air
Except to see how their successors fare?
My audience! and they sit, each ghostly man
Striving to look as living as he can,
Brother by breathing brother; thou art set,
Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret
A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's spleen
Who loves not to unlock them. Friends! I mean
The living in good earnest — ye elect
Chiefly for love — suppose not I reject
Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,
Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,
To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,
Verona! stay — thou, spirit, come not near
Now — not this time desert thy cloudy place
To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face!
I need not fear this audience, I make free
With them, but then this is no place for thee!
The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown
Up out of memories of Marathon,
Would echo like his own sword's griding screech
Braying a Persian shield, — the silver speech
Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
The knights to tilt, — wert thou to hear! What heart
Have I to play my puppets, bear my part
Before these worthies?

Lo, the Past is hurled

In twain: up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
Verona. 'T is six hundred years and more
Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled
The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled:
A last remains of sunset dimly burned
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
In one long flare of crimson; as a brand,
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye
From all Verona cared for the soft sky.
But, gathering in its ancient market-place,
Talked group with restless group; and not a face
But wrath made livid, for among them were
Death's stanch purveyors, such as have in care
To feast him. Fear had long since taken root
In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,
The ripe hate, like a wine: to note the way
It worked while each grew drunk! men grave and gray
Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow
About the hollows where a heart should be;
But the young gulped with a delirious glee
Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood
At the fierce news: for, be it understood,
Envoys apprised Verona that her prince
Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since

A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust
Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust
With Ecelin Romano, from his seat
Ferrara, — over zealous in the feat
And stumbling on a peril unaware,
Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,
They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.
Immediate succor from the Lombard League
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,
For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope
Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast!
Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.
"Prone is the purple pavis; Este makes
Mirth for the devil when he undertakes
To play the Ecelin; as if it cost
Merely your pushing-by to gain a post
Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,
There be sound reasons that preferment fall
On our beloved" . . .
"Duke o' the Rood, why not?"
Shouted an Estian, "grudge ye such a lot?
The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,
Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown,
That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts,
And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts."
"Taurello," quoth an envoy, "as in wane
Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain
To fly but forced the earth his couch to make
Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,

Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet
That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps: but let
Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs
The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs
The sea it means to cross because of him.
Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;
Creep closer on the creature! Every day
Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,
Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips
Telling upon his perished finger-tips
How many ancestors are to depose
Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze
Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt
Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt
When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet
Buccio Virtù — God's wafer, and the street
Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!
This could not last. Off Salinguerra went
To Padua, Podestà, 'with pure intent,'
Said he, 'my presence, judged the single bar
To permanent tranquillity, may jar
No longer' — so! his back is fairly turned?
The pair of goodly palaces are burned,
The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh, drunk
A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk
In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,
Old Salinguerra back again — I say,
Old Salinguerra in the town once more

Uprooting, overturning, flame before,
Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled;
Who scaped the carnage followed; then the dead
Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,
He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone.
Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce
Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,
On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth
To see troop after troop encamp beneath
I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch
It took so many patient months to snatch
Out of the marsh; while just within their walls
Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls
A parley: 'let the Count wind up the war!'
Richard, light-hearted as a plunging-star,
Agrees to enter for the kindest ends
Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,
No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort
Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.
Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog;
'Ten, twenty, thirty, — curse the catalogue
Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange, Taurello shows
Not the least sign of life' — whereat arose
A general growl: 'How? With his victors by?
I and my Veronese? My troops and I?
Receive us, was your word?' So jogged they on,
Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone
Into the trap! —

Six hundred years ago!

Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
(Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,
Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills
His sprawling path through letters anciently
Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)
When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,
Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque,
Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave
Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
Or make the Alps less easy to recross;
And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,
Was excommunicate that very year.
"The triple-bearded Teuton come to life!"
Groaned the Great League; and, arming for the strife,
Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,
Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,
Its cry; what cry?
"The Emperor to come!"
His crowd of feudatories, all and some,
That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,
One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
Scattered anon, took station here and there,
And carried it, till now, with little care —
Cannot but cry for him; how else rebut
Us longer? Cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut
In the mid-sea, each domineering crest,
Nothing save such another throe can wrest
From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown

Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown
Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
Too sure to over-riot and confound
Ere long each brilliant islet with itself
Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,
Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the bruised
And sullen wreck! Sunlight to be diffused
For that! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,
The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst
Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,
And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,
So kindly blazed it — that same blaze to brood
O'er every cluster of the multitude
Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,
An emulous exchange of pulses, vents
Of nature into nature; till some growth
Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe
A surface solid now, continuous, one:
"The Pope, for us the People, who begun
The People, carries on the People thus,
To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us!"
See you?
Or say, Two Principles that live
Each fitly by its Representative.
"Hill-cat" — who called him so? — the gracefullest
Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest
Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,
Those talons to their sheath!) whose velvet purr
Soothes jealous neighbors when a Saxon scout

— Arpo or Yoland, is it? — one without
A country or a name, presumes to couch
Beside their noblest; until men avouch
That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,
Conrad descries no fitter, rear or van,
Than Ecelo! They laughed as they enrolled
That name at Milan on the page of gold,
Godego's lord, — Ramon, Marostica,
Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,
And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief!
No laughter when his son, "the Lombard Chief"
Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness now —
The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,
The Asolan and Euganean hills,
The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills
Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay
Among and care about them; day by day
Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,
A castle building to defend a cot,
A cot built for a castle to defend,
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end
To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge
By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.
He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems
The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,
— A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
From its old interests, and nowise changed

By its new neighborhood; perchance the vaunt
Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant
Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in
A son as cruel; and this Ecelin
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall,
And curling and compliant; but for all
Romano (so they styled him) throve, that neck
Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek
Proved 't was some fiend, not him, the man's-flesh went
To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,
Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole
I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole
Successively, why should not he shed blood
To further a design? Men understood
Living was pleasant to him as he wore
His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,
Propped on his truncheon in the public way,
While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,
Lost at Oliero's convent.
Hill-cats, face
With Azzo, our Guelf Lion! — nor disgrace
A worthiness conspicuous near and far
(Atii at Rome while free and consular,
Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)
By trumpeting the Church's princely son
Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,
Ancona's March, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,
Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk
Found it intolerable to be sunk

(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)
Quite out of summer while alive and well:
Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,
'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,
Striving to coax from his decrepit brains
The reason Father Porphyry took pains
To blot those ten lines out which used to stand
First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.
The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore
Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;
And while within his palace these debate
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,
Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare
Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care
For aught that 's seen or heard until we shut
The smother in, the lights, all noises but
The carroch's booming: safe at last! Why strange
Such a recess should lurk behind a range
Of banquet-rooms? Your finger — thus — you push
A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush
Upon the banqueters, select your prey,
Waiting, the slaughter-weapons in the way
Strewing this very bench, with sharpened ear
A preconcerted signal to appear;
Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,
Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part
To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;
Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow
The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?

What woman stood beside him? not the more
Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes
Because that arras fell between? Her wise
And lulling words are yet about the room,
Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom
Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.
And so reclines he, saturate with her,
Until an outcry from the square beneath
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe
Above the cunning element, and shakes
The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks
On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,
The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away
Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying-day,
In his wool wedding-robe. For he — for he,
Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,
(If I should falter now) — for he is Thine!
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!
A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
Relentless into the consummate orb
That scared it from its right to roll along
A sempiternal path with dance and song
Fulfilling its allotted period,
Serenest of the progeny of God!
Who yet resigns it not; His darling stoops
With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops
Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent
Utterly with thee, its shy element

Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear.
Still, what if I approach the august sphere
Named now with only one name, disentwine
That under-current soft and argentine
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass
Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass
In John's transcendent vision, — launch once more
That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume —
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope
Into a darkness quieted by hope;
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye
In gracious twilights where His chosen lie,
I would do this! if I should falter now!
  In Mantua-territory half is slough
Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet-oaks
Breed o'er the river-beds; even Mincio chokes
With sand the summer through; but 't is morass
In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,
Some thirty years before this evening's coil,
One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,
Goito; just a castle built amid
A few low mountains; firs and larches hid
Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound
The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,
Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress,
Secure beside in its own loveliness,
So peered with airy head, below, above,

The castle at its toils, the lapwings love
To glean among at grape-time. Pass within.
A maze of corridors contrived for sin,
Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,
You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last
A maple-panelled room: that haze which seems
Floating about the panel, if there gleams
A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold
And in light-graven characters unfold
The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what shade
Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,
Cut like a company of palms to prop
The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,
Leaning together; in the carver's mind
Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined
With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair
Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear
A vintage; graceful sister-palms! But quick
To the main wonder, now. A vault, see; thick
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits
Across the buttress suffer light by fits
Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop —
A dullish gray-streaked cumbrous font, a group
Round it, each side of it, where'er one sees,
Upholds it — shrinking Caryatides
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilied flesh
Beneath her Maker's finger when the fresh
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.
The font's edge burdens every shoulder, so

They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed;
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,
Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length
Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
Like priestesses because of sin impure
Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.
And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
Pardon for them: constant as eve he came
To sit beside each in her turn, the same
As one of them, a certain space: and awe
Made a great indistinctness till he saw
Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,
Gold seven times globed; surely our maiden shrinks
And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain
Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain
Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt
From off the rosary whereby the crypt
Keeps count of the contritions of its charge?
Then with a step more light, a heart more large,
He may depart, leave her and every one
To linger out the penance in mute stone.
Ah, but Sordello? 'T is the tale I mean
To tell you. In this castle may be seen,
On the hill-tops, or underneath the vines,

Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines
That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,
A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
Sordello: do but look on him awhile
Watching ('t is autumn) with an earnest smile
The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
Among the yellowing vineyards; see him lurk
('T is winter with its sullenest of storms)
Beside that arras-length of broidered forms,
On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright
— Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,
And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,
Auria, and their Child, with all his wives
From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,
Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face
— Look, now he turns away! Yourselves shall trace
(The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,
A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
Delight at every sense; you can believe
Sordello foremost in the regal class
Nature has broadly severed from her mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,
For loose fertility; a footfall there
Suffices to upturn to the warm air
Half-germinating spices; mere decay
Produces richer life; and day by day

New pollen on the lily-petal grows,
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.
You recognize at once the finer dress
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
(As though she would not trust them with her world)
A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
And lets but half the sun look fervid through.
How can such love? — like souls on each full-fraught
Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught
Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love
Becomes an aching weight; and, to remove
A curse that haunts such natures — to preclude
Their finding out themselves can work no good
To what they love nor make it very blest
By their endeavor, — they are fain invest
The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,
Availing it to purpose, to control,
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy
And separate interests that may employ
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.
Nor rest they here; fresh births of beauty wake
Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
With every mode of loveliness: then cast
Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
Before a coming glory. Up and down
Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine
To throb the secret forth; a touch divine —
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod:

Visibly through His garden walketh God.
So fare they. Now revert. One character
Denotes them through the progress and the stir, —
A need to blend with each external charm,
Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,
In something not themselves; they would belong
To what they worship — stronger and more strong
Thus prodigally fed — which gathers shape
And feature, soon imprisons past escape
The votary framed to love and to submit
Nor ask, as passionately he kneels to it,
Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs
A legend: light had birth ere moons and suns,
Flowing through space a river and alone,
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown
Hither and thither, foundering and blind,
When into each of them rushed light — to find
Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.
Let such forego their just inheritance!
For there 's a class that eagerly looks, too,
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
Proclaims each new revealment born a twin
With a distinctest consciousness within
Referring still the quality, now first
Revealed, to their own soul — its instinct nursed
In silence, now remembered better, shown
More thoroughly, but not the less their own;
A dream come true; the special exercise
Of any special function that implies

The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,
Dormant within their nature all along —
Whose fault? So, homage, other souls direct
Without, turns inward; "How should this deject
Thee, soul?" they murmur; "wherefore strength quelled
Because, its trivial accidents withheld,
Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,
Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,
Like thine — existence cannot satiate,
Cannot surprise? laugh thou at envious fate,
Who, from earth's simplest combination stampt
With individuality — uncrampt
By living its faint elemental life,
Dost soar to heaven's complexest essence, rife
With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,
Equal to being all!"
In truth? Thou hast
Life, then — wilt challenge life for us: our race
Is vindicated so, obtains its place
In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we
May follow, to the meanest, finally,
With our more bounded wills?
Ah, but to find
A certain mood enervate such a mind,
Counsel it slumber in the solitude
Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good
Its nature just as life and time accord
"— Too narrow an arena to reward

Emprize — the world's occasion worthless since
Not absolutely fitted to evince
Its mastery!" Or if yet worse befall,
And a desire possess it to put all
That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere
Contain it, — to display completely here
The mastery another life should learn,
Thrusting in time eternity's concern, —
So that Sordello ... Fool, who spied the mark
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
Already as he loiters? Born just now,
With the new century, beside the glow
And efflorescence out of barbarism;
Witness a Greek or two from the abysm
That stray through Florence-town with studious air,
Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair:
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!
While at Siena is Guidone set,
Forehead on hand; a painful birth must be
Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy
Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze
At the moon: look you! The same orange haze, —
The same blue stripe round that — and, i' the midst,
Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who didst
Pursue the dizzy painter!
Woe, then, worth
Any officious babble letting forth
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous
To spirit lodged in a contracted house!

Go back to the beginning, rather; blend
It gently with Sordello's life; the end
Is piteous, you may see, but much between
Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to screen
The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon
The goblin! So they found at Babylon,
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)
Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,
In rummaging among the rarities,
A certain coffer; he who made the prize
Opened it greedily; and out there curled
Just such another plague, for half the world
Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch asquat,
Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot
Until your time is ripe! The coffer-lid
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid
Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.
Who will may hear Sordello's story told,
And how he never could remember when
He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's
Glided his youth away; beyond the glades
On the fir-forest's border, and the rim
Of the low range of mountain, was for him
No other world: but this appeared his own
To wander through at pleasure and alone.
The castle too seemed empty; far and wide
Might he disport; only the northern side
Lay under a mysterious interdict—

Slight, just enough remembered to restrict
His roaming to the corridors, the vault
Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,
The maple-chamber, and the little nooks
And nests, and breezy parapet that looks
Over the woods to Mantua: there he strolled.
Some foreign women-servants, very old,
Tended and crept about him — all his clew
To the world's business and embroiled ado
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.
And first a simple sense of life engrossed
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;
The day's adventures for the day suffice —
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,
Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
And, when September finds them sere or scant,
Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,
And hies him after unforeseen delight.
So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed;
As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed
Luxuriantly the fancies infantine
His admiration, bent on making fine
Its novel friend at any risk, would fling
In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king,
Confessed those minions! Eager to dispense
So much from his own stock of thought and sense

As might enable each to stand alone
And serve him for a fellow; with his own,
Joining the qualities that just before
Had graced some older favorite. Thus they wore
A fluctuating halo, yesterday
Set flicker and to-morrow filched away, —
Those upland objects each of separate name,
Each with an aspect never twice the same,
Waxing and waning as the new-born host
Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,
Gave to familiar things a face grotesque;
Only, preserving through the mad burlesque
A grave regard. Conceive! the orpine-patch
Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch
The day those archers wound along the vines —
Related to the Chief that left their lines
To climb with clinking step the northern stair
Up to the solitary chambers where
Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall;
He o'er-festooning every interval,
As the adventurous spider, making light
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,
From barbican to battlement; so flung
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
Our architect, — the breezy morning fresh
Above, and merry, — all his waving mesh
Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.
This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged
To laying such a spangled fabric low

Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.
But its abundant will was balked here: doubt
Rose tardily in one so fenced about
From most that nurtures judgment, care and pain:
Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,
Less favored, to adopt betimes and force
Stead us, diverted from our natural course
Of joys, — contrive some yet amid the dearth,
Vary and render them, it may be, worth
Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence
Selfish enough, without a moral sense
However feeble; what informed the boy
Others desired a portion in his joy?
Or say a ruthful chance broke woof and warp —
A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,
A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless eyes
Warm in the brake — could these undo the trance
Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance
That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat fern-seed
And peer beside us and report indeed
If (your word) "genius" dawned with throes and stings
And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs
Summers and winters quietly came and went.
Time put at length that period to content,
By right the world should have imposed: bereft
Of its good offices, Sordello, left
To study his companions, managed rip

Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,
Core with its crust, their natures with his own:
Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.
As if the poppy felt with him! Though he
Partook the poppy's red effrontery
Till Autumn spoiled their fleering quite with rain,
And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane
Lay bare. That's gone! Yet why renounce, for that,
His disenchanted tributaries — flat
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,
Their simple presence might not well be borne
Whose parley was a transport once: recall
The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,
A poppy: why distrust the evidence
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense?
The new-born judgment answered: "little boots
Beholding other creatures' attributes
And having none!" or, say that it sufficed,
"Yet, could one but possess, one's self," (enticed
Judgment) "some special office!" Naught beside
Serves you? "Well, then, be somehow justified
For this ignoble wish to circumscribe
And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe
Of actual pleasures: what, now, from without
Effects it? — proves, despite a lurking doubt,
Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared?
That tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared
The better for them?" Thus much craved his soul.

Alas, from the beginning love is whole
And true; if sure of naught beside, most sure
Of its own truth at least; nor may endure
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know
How hot the pulses throb its heart below.
While its own helplessness and utter want
Of means to worthily be ministrant
To what it worships, do but fan the more
Its flame, exalt the idol far before
Itself as it would have it ever be.
Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,
Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,
Care little, take mysterious comfort still,
But look forth tremblingly to ascertain
If others judge their claims not urged in vain,
And say for them their stifled thoughts aloud.
So, they must ever live before a crowd:
— "Vanity," Naddo tells you.
Whence contrive
A crowd, now? From these women just alive,
That archer-troop? Forth glided — not alone
Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,
Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,
One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul
Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms
On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,
Started the meagre Tuscan up, — her eyes,
The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)
— But the entire out-world: whatever, scraps

And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,
Conceited the world's offices, and he
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,
Nor counted a befitting heritage
Each, of its own right, singly to engage
Some man, no other, — such now dared to stand
Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every hand
Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned
A sort of human life . at least, was turned
A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.
Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,
Ere he could choose, surrounded him; a stuff
To work his pleasure on; there, sure enough:
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze?
Are they to simply testify the ways
He who convoked them sends his soul along
With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song?
— While they live each his life, boast each his own
Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone
In some one point where something dearest loved
Is easiest gained — far worthier to be proved
Than aught he envies in the forest-wights!
No simple and self-evident delights,
But mixed desires of unimagined range,
Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,
Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognized
By this, the sudden company — loves prized
By those who are to prize his own amount
Of loves. Once care because such make account,

Allow a foreign recognition stamp
The current value, and his crowd shall vamp
Him counterfeits enough; and so their print
Be on the piece, 't is gold, attests the mint,
And "good," pronounce they whom his new appeal
Is made to: if their casual print conceal —
This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
What he have lived without, nor felt the loss —
Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,
— What matter? so must speech expand the dumb
Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late
No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,
Betakes himself to study hungrily
Just what the puppets his crude fantasy
Supposes notablest, popes, kings, priests, knights,
May please to promulgate for appetites;
Accepting all their artificial joys
Not as he views them, but as he employs
Each shape to estimate the other's stock
Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock
Of authorized enjoyments he may spend
Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend
With tree and flower — nay more entirely, else
'T were mockery: for instance, "how excels
My life that chieftain's?" (who apprised the youn
Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,
Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his tent
Remissly? Be it so — my head is bent
Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.

What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep
I climbed an hour ago with little toil —
We are alike there. But can I, too, foil
The Guelfs' paid stabber, carelessly afford
Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword
Baffling their project in a moment?" Here
No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer
To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,
Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand
With Ecelin's success — try, now! He soon
Was satisfied, returned as to the moon
From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt
For feats, from failure happily exempt,
In fancy at his beck. "One day I will
Accomplish it! Are they not older still
— Not grown up men and women? 'T is beside
Only a dream; and though I must abide
With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent
For all myself, acquire an instrument
For acting what these people act; my soul
Hunting a body out, may gain its whole
Desire some day!" How else express chagrin
And resignation, show the hope steal in
With which he let sink from an aching wrist
The rough-hewn ash bow? straight, a gold shaft hissed
Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down
Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's Town
Is gained Him back!" Why bend rough ash-bows
more?

Thus lives he: if not careless as before,
Comforted: for one may anticipate,
Rehearse the Future, be prepared when fate
Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names
Startle, real places of enormous fames,
Este abroad and Ecelin at home
To worship him, — Mantua, Verona, Rome
To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?
Rather test qualities to heart's content —
Summon them, thrice selected, near and far —
Compress the starriest into one star,
And grasp the whole at once!
The pageant thinned
Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind
His spirit passed to winnow and divide;
Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side
The strong clave to the wise; with either classed
The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed
Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced
Themselves eventually, graces loosed,
And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape
Whose potency no creature should escape.
Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?
Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,
Is some gray scorching Saracenic wine
The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline —
Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,
Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,
Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent,

To keep in mind his sluggish armament
Of Canaan. — Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce
Demeanor! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce
So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells,
Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells
On the obdurate! That right arm indeed
Has thunder for its slave; but where 's the need
Of thunder if the stricken multitude
Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood,
While songs go up exulting, then dispread,
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels? 'T is the tune,
Nor much unlike the words the women croon
Smilingly, colorless and faint-designed
Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind
Of her extreme youth's love-tales. "Eglamor
Made that!" Half minstrel and half emperor,
What but ill objects vexed him? Such he slew.
The kinder sort were easy to subdue
By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones;
And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones
Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,
Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,
Instead of saying, neither less nor more,
He had discovered, as our world before,
Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid
Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid
The youth — what thefts of every clime and day
Contributed to purfle the array

He climbed with (June at deep) some close ravine
'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipt
Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipt
He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock —
Though really on the stubs of living rock
Ages ago it crenneled; vines for roof,
Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,
Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,
Born of the simmering quiet, there to die.
Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied
Mighty descents of forest; multiplied
Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,
There gendered the grave maple-stocks at ease.
And, proud of its observer, strait the wood
Tried old surprises on him; black it stood
A sudden barrier ('t was a cloud passed o'er)
So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more
Must pass; yet presently (the cloud despatched)
Each clump, behold, was glistering detached
A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!
Yet could not he denounce the stratagems
He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang
White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang
To measure, that whole palpitating breast
Of heaven, 't was Apollo, nature prest
At eve to worship.

Time stole: by degrees
The Pythons perish off; his votaries

Sink to respectful distance; songs redeem
Their pains, but briefer; their dismissals seem
Emphatic; only girls are very slow
To disappear — his Delians! Some that glow
O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench
Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench;
Alike in one material circumstance —
All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance
The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,
His Daphne! "We secure Count Richard's voice
In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends
As our Taurello," say his faded friends,
"By granting him our Palma!" — The sole child,
They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled
Ecelin, years before this Adelaide
Wedded and turned him wicked: "but the maid
Rejects his suit," those sleepy women boast.
She, scorning all beside, deserves the most
Sordello: so, conspicuous in his world
Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound
About her like a glory! even the ground
Was bright as with spilt sunbeams; breathe not, breathe
Not! — poised, see, one leg doubled underneath
Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,
The vein-streaks swoln a richer violet where
The languid blood lies heavil ; yet calm

On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,
As but suspended in the act to rise
By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes
Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets
Apollo's gaze in the pine-glooms.
Time fleets:
That 's worst! Because the pre-appointed age
Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage
And crowd she promised. Lean he grows and pale,
Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone
He tarries here! The earnest smile is gone.
How long this might continue, matters not;
— For ever, possibly; since to the spot
None come: our lingering Taurello quits
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits
Back to her place disburdened of a care.
Strange — to be constant here if he is there!
Is it distrust? O, never! for they both
Goad Ecelin alike — Romano's growth
So daily manifest, that Azzo 's dumb
And Richard wavers: let but Friedrich come!
— Find matter for the minstrelsy's report,
Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court
To sing us a Messina morning up,
And, double rillet of a drinking-cup,
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,
Northward to Provence that, and thus far south
The other. What a method to apprise

Neighbors of births, espousals, obsequies!
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour
Records; and his performance makes a tour,
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,
Until the Formidable House is famed
Over the country — as Taurello aimed,
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,
The novelty. Such games, her absence stopped,
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse
No longer, in the light of day pursues
Her plans at Mantua: whence an accident
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content,
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,
The veritable business of mankind.

BOOK THE SECOND.

THIS BUBBLE OF FANCY,

THE woods were long austere with snow: at last
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods
Our buried year, a witch, grew young again
To placid incantations, and that stain
About were from her cauldron, green smoke blent
With those black pines"—so Eglamor gave vent
To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke
From his companion; brother Naddo shook
The solemnest of brows; "Beware," he said,
"Of setting up conceits in nature's stead!"
Forth wandered our Sordello. Naught so sure
As that to-day's adventure will secure
Palma, the visioned lady—only pass
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,
Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks
Of withered fern with gold, into those walks
Of pine, and take her! Buoyantly he went.
Again his stooping forehead was besprent
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide
Opened the great morass, shot every side
With flashing water through and through; a-shine,

Thick-steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine
Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced
Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,
But warily; though Mincio leaped no more,
Each footfall burst up in the marish-floor
A diamond jet: and if he stopped to pick
Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,
And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,
A sudden pond would silently encroach
This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge
Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge
Flushed, now, and panting, — crowds to see, — will own
She loves him — Boniface to hear, to groan,
To leave his suit! One screen of pine-trees still
Opposes; but — the startling spectacle —
Mantua, this time! Under the walls — a crowd
Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud
Round a pavilion. How he stood!
In truth
No prophecy had come to pass: his youth
In its prime now — and where was homage poured
Upon Sordello? — born to be adored,
And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made
To cope with any, cast into the shade
By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick
And tingle in his blood; a sleight — a trick —
And much would be explained. It went for naught —
The best of their endowments were ill bought
With his identity; nay, the conceit,

That this day's roving led to Palma's feet
Was not so vain — list! The word, "Palma!" Steal
Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,
And this — abjure!
What next? The curtains, see,
Dividing! She is there; and presently
He will be there — the proper You, at length —
In your own cherished dress of grace and strength:
Most like, the very Boniface!
Not so.
It was a showy man advanced; but though
A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound
Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,
— "This is not he," Sordello felt; while, "Place
For the best Troubadour of Boniface!"
Hollaed the Jongleurs, — "Eglamor, whose lay
Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day!"
Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute
With the new lute-string, "Elys," named to suit
The song: he stealthily at watch, the while,
Biting his lip to keep down a great smile
Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain
Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;
So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm
The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,
Mistaking its true version — was the tale
Not of Apollo? Only, what avail
Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,
If the man dared no further? Has he ceased?

And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,
Sordello was beside him, had begun
(Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend
The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,
Taking the other's names and time and place
For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,
After the flying story; word made leap
Out word, rhyme — rhyme; the lay could barely keep
Pace with the action visibly rushing past:
Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast
Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull
That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full
His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath his tongue,
And found 't was Apis' flank his hasty prong
Insulted. But the people — but the cries,
The crowding round, and proffering the prize!
(For he had gained some prize) — He seemed to shrink
Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink
One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,
Silent; but at her knees the very maid
Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,
The same pure fleecy hair; one weft of which,
Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er
She leant, speaking some six words and no more.
He answered something, anything; and she
Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily
Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again
Moved the arrested magic; in his brain
Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,

And greater glare, until the intense flare
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.
And when he woke 't was many a furlong thence,
At home; the sun shining his ruddy wont;
The customary birds'-chirp; but his front
Was crowned — was crowned! Her scented scarf around
His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground?
A prize? He turned, and peeringly on him
Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,
Ready to talk. — "The Jongleurs in a troop
Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe
And Tagliafer; how strange! a childhood spent
In taking, well for him, so brave a bent!
Since Eglamor," they heard, "was dead with spite,
And Palma chose him for her minstrel."

Light
Sordello rose — to think, now; hitherto
He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew
Out of it all! Best live from first to last
The transport o'er again. A week he passed,
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance
Bounding his own achievement. Strange! A man
Recounted an adventure, but began
Imperfectly; his own task was to fill
The framework up, sing well what he sang ill,
Supply the necessary points, set loose
As many incidents of little use
— More imbecile the other, not to see

Their relative importance clear as he!
But, for a special pleasure in the act
Of singing — had he ever turned, in fact,
From Elys, to sing Elys? — from each fit
Of rapture, to contrive a song of it?
True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind
Into a treasure, helped himself to find
A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared
By means of that mere snatch to many a hoard
Of fancies; as some falling cone bears soft
The eye, along the fir-tree-spire, aloft
To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause
Such a performance might exact applause
From men, if they had fancies too? Could fate
Decree they found a beauty separate
In the poor snatch itself? — "Take Elys, there,
— 'Her head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,
So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks
Colored like honey oozed from topmost rocks
Sun-blanched the livelong summer' — if they heard
Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,
And loved them as I love them who have run
These fingers through those pale locks, let the sun
Into the white cool skin — who first could clutch,
Then praise — I needs must be a God to such.
Or if some few, above themselves, and yet
Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set
An impress on our gift? So, men believe
And worship what they know not, nor receive

Delight from. Have they fancies — slow, perchance,
Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance
Until, by song, each floating part be linked
To each, and all grow palpable, distinct?"
He pondered this.
Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near
And nearer, and the underwood was pushed
Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed
At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid;
Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade
Came o'er the sky although 't was midday yet:
You saw each half-shut downcast floweret
Flutter — "a Roman bride, when they 'd dispart
Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,
Holding that famous rape in memory still,
Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,
And looked thus," Eglamor would say — indeed
'T is Eglamor, no other, these precede
Home hither in the woods. "'T were surely sweet
Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat
To sleep!" judged Naddo, who in person led
Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,
A scanty company; for, sooth to say,
Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.
Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends
Nigh weary; still the death proposed amends.
"Let us but get them safely through my song
And home again!" quoth Naddo.

All along,
This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)
— This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,
Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.
For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,
And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,
A ceremony that withdrew the last
Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil
Which hid the holy place — should one so frail
Stand there without such effort? or repine
That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine
He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,
The Power responded, and some sound or sight
Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed
In rhyme, the beautiful, forever! mixed
With his own life, unloosed when he should please,
Having it safe at hand, ready to ease
All pain, remove all trouble; every time
He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,
Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love,
Faltering; so distinct and far above
Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,
Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up
In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,
His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few
And their arrangement finds enough to do
For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!
The calling marking him a man apart

From men — one not to care, take counsel for
Cold hearts, comfortless faces — (Eglamor
Was neediest of his tribe) — since verse, the gift,
Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift
Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth
And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.
So, Eglamor was not without his pride!
The sorriest bat which cowers through noontide
While other birds are jocund, has one time
When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime
Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer;
And Eglamor was noblest poet here
He knew that, 'mid the April woods, he cast
Conceits upon in plenty as he past,
That Naddo might suppose him not to think
Entirely on the coming triumph: wink
At the one weakness! 'T was a fervid child,
That song of his — no brother of the guild
Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,
The exaltation and the overthrow:
Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,
His life — to that it came. Yet envy sank
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
And, for the first time, shouted — tried to shout
Like others, not from any zeal to show
Pleasure that way: the common sort did so,
And what was Eglamor? who, bending down
The same, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,

Left one great tear on it, then joined his band
— In time; for some were watching at the door
Who knows what envy may effect? "Give o'er,
Nor charm his lips, nor craze him!" (here one spied
And disengaged the withered crown) — "Beside
His crown! How prompt and clear those verses rung
To answer yours! nay, sing them!" And he sung
Them calmly. Home he went; friends used to wait
His coming, zealous to congratulate,
But, to a man, so quickly runs report,
Could do no less than leave him, and escort
His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought:
What must his future life be? was he brought
So low, who was so lofty this Spring morn?
At length he said, "Best sleep now with my scorn,
And by to-morrow I devise some plain
Expedient!" So, he slept, nor woke again.
They found as much, those friends, when they returned
O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned
About Sordello's paradise, his roves
Among the hills and valleys, plains and groves,
Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,
Polished by slow degrees, completed last
To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.
Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,
They lay the beaten man in his abode,
Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,
Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore
By means of it, however, one step more

In joy; and, mastering the round at length,
Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,
When from his covert forth he stood, addressed
Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,
Primæval pines o'ercanopy his couch,
And, most of all, his fame — (shall I avouch
Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,
And laughed as from his brow Sordello took
The crown, and laid it on his breast, and said
It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)
— Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell.
A plant they have yielding a three-leaved bell
Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails
Till evening; evening gives it to her gales
To clear away with such forgotten things
As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings
Him to their mind, and bears his very name.
So much for Eglamor. My own month came;
'T was a sunrise of blossoming and May.
Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay
Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars
That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars
Dug up at Baiæ, when the south wind shed
The ripest, made him happier; filleted
And robed the same, only a lute beside
Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide
The country stretched: Goito slept behind
— The castle and its covert, which confined
Him with his hopes and fears; so fain of old

To leave the story of his birth untold.
At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow
Of his Apollo-life, a certain low
And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,
Admonished, no such fortune could be his,
All was quite false and sure to fade one day:
The closelier drew he round him his array
Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when
A reason for his difference from men
Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest
While aught of that old life, superbly drest
Down to its meanest incident, remained
A mystery — alas, they soon explained
Away Apollo! and the tale amounts
To this: when at Vicenza both her Counts
Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,
Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,
Reviled him as he followed; he for spite
Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night
Among the flames young Ecelin was born
Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn
From the roused populace hard on the rear,
By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear
Grew high; into the thick Elcorte leapt,
Saved her, and died; no creature left except
His child to thank. And when the full escape
Was known — how men impaled from chine to nape
Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned
Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned

Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,
Missing the sweeter prey — such courage well
Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,
Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince
Within a blind retreat where Adelaide —
(For, once this notable discovery made,
The Past at every point was understood)
— Might harbor easily when times were rude,
When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve
That pledge of Agnes Este — loath to leave
Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,
Taurello biding there ambiguously —
He who could have no motive now to moil
For his own fortunes since their utter spoil —
As it were worth while yet (went the report)
To disengage himself from her. In short,
Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named
His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed
— How shall I phrase it? — Monarch of the World!
For, on the morning that array was furled
Forever, and in place of one a slave
To longings, wild indeed, but longings save
In dreams as wild, suppressed — one daring not
Assume the mastery such dreams allot,
Until a magical equipment, strength
Grace, wisdom, decked him too, — he chose at length,
Content with unproved wits and failing frame,
In virtue of his simple will, to claim
That mastery, no less — to do his best

With means so limited, and let the rest
Go by, — the seal was set: never again
Sordello could in his own sight remain
One of the many, one with hopes and cares
And interests nowise distinct from theirs,
Only peculiar in a thriveless store
Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;
Never again for him and for the crowd
A common law was challenged and allowed
If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied
By a mad impulse nothing justified
Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce
Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course
By any known example? Men no more
Compete with him than tree and flower before;
Himself, inactive, yet is greater far
Than such as act, each stooping to his star,
Acquiring thence his function; he has gained
The same result with meaner mortals trained
To strength or beauty, moulded to express
Each the idea that rules him; since no less
He comprehends that function, but can still
Embrace the others, take of might his fill
With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix
Their qualities, or for a moment fix
On one; abiding free meantime, uncramped
By any partial organ, never stamped
Strong, and to strength turning all energies —
Wise, and restricted to becoming wise —

That is, he loves not, nor possesses One
Idea that, star-like over, lures him on
To its exclusive purpose. "Fortunate!
This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate
A soul so various — took no casual mould
Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,
Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change
As that: whereas it left her free to range,
Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.
So, range, my soul! — who, by self-consciousness,
The last drop of all beauty dost express —
The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence
For thee: but for the world, that can dispense
Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder — make
A shift to love at second-hand, and take
Those for its idols who but idolize,
Themselves, — world that loves souls as strong or wise,
Who, themselves, love strength, wisdom, — it shall bow
Surely in unexampled worship now,
Discerning me!" —
(Dear monarch, I beseech,
Notice how lamentably wide a breach
Is here! discovering this, discover too
What our poor world has possibly to do
With it! As pygmy natures as you please —
So much the better for you; take your ease;
Look on, and laugh; style yourself God alone;
Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone:

All that is right enough: but why want us
To know that you yourself know thus and thus?)
"The world shall bow to me conceiving all
Man's life, who sees its blisses, great and small,
Afar — not tasting any; no machine
To exercise my utmost will is mine:
Be mine mere consciousness! Let them perceive
What I could do, a mastery believe,
Asserted and established to the throng
By their selected evidence of song
Which now shall prove, whate'er they are, or seek
To be, I am — who take no pains to speak,
Change no old standards of perfection, vex
With no strange forms created to perplex,
But will perform their bidding and no more,
At their own satiating-point give o'er,
While each shall love in me the love that leads
His soul to its perfection." Song, not deeds,
(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook
Mankind no other organ; he would look
For not another channel to dispense
His own volition, and receive their sense
Of its existing; but would be content,
Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.
Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet seek
And, striving, be admired, nor grace bespeak
Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes;
Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods:
But he would give and take on song's one point.

Like some huge throbbing-stone that, poised a-joint
Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,
Must sue in just one accent; tempests shed
Thunder, and raves the landstorm: only let
That key by any little noise be set —
The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch
On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch
Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,
However loud, however low — all lift
The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.
Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,
And this, for his, will hardly interfere!
Its businesses in blood and blaze this year
But wile the hour away — a pastime slight
Till he shall step upon the platform: right!
And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,
Proved feasible, be counselled! thought enough, —
Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:
Were it a less digested plan! how swerve
To-morrow? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes,
And watch the soaring hawk there! Life escapes
Merrily thus.
He thoroughly read o'er
His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,
Praying him visit Mantua and supply
A famished world.
The evening star was high
When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived
Before him: friends applauded, foes connived,

And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
Angels, and all these angels would be blest
Supremely by a song — the thrice-renowned
Goito manufacture. Then he found
(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
A sore annoyance: 't was the song's effect
He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect!
In the past life, what might be singing's use?
Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse
Praise, not the toilsome process which procured
That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams abjured,
No over-leaping means for ends — take both
For granted or take neither! I am loath
To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's;
But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors
Go pine; "the master certes meant to waste
No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
He 'd please anon: true bard, in short, disturb
His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,
Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence
The staple of his verses, common sense:
He built on man's broad nature — gift of gifts,
That power to build! The world contented shifts
With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
Its poet-soul — that 's, after all, a freak
(The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)
With our herd's stupid sterling happiness

So plainly incompatible that — yes —
Yes — should a son of his improve the breed
And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed!"
"Well, there's Goito and its woods anon,
If the worst happen; best go stoutly on
Now!" thought Sordello.
Ay, and goes on yet!
You pother with your glossaries to get
A notion of the Troubadour's intent
In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent —
Much as you study arras how to twirl
His angelot, plaything of page and girl,
Once; but you surely reach, at last, — or, no!
Never quite reach what struck the people so,
As from the welter of their time he drew
Its elements successively to view,
Followed all actions backward on their course,
And catching up, unmingled at the source,
Such a strength, such a weakness, added then
A touch or two, and turned them into men.
Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape;
Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
Sinner the other flared portentous by
A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised
At his success? The scheme was realized
Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud
To speak, delicious homage to receive,

The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,
Who said, "But Anafest — why asks he less
Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess,
It seemed too much but yestereve!" — the youth,
Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!
You love Bianca, surely, from your song;
I knew I was unworthy!" — soft or strong,
In poured such tributes ere he had arranged
Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,
Digested. Courted thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretensions and his cares,
He caught himself shamefully hankering
After the obvious petty joys that spring
From real life, fain relinquish pedestal
And condescend with pleasures — one and all
To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain
Himself to single joys and so refrain
From tasting their quintessence, frustrated, sure,
His prime design; each joy must he abjure
Even for love of it.
He laughed: what sage
But perishes if from his magic page
He looked because, at the first line, a proof
'T was heard salutes him from the cavern-roof?
"On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,
To the day's task; compel your slave provide
Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in brief —
Cannot men bear, now, something better? — fly

A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
Of essences? the period sure has ceased
For such: present us with ourselves, at least,
Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates
Made flesh: wait not!"
Awhile the poet waits
However. The first trial was enough:
He left imagining, to try the stuff
That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
To reach the light — his Language. How he sought
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought
That Language, — welding words into the crude
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude
Armor was hammered out, in time to be
Approved beyond the Roman panoply
Melted to make it, — boots not. This obtained
With some ado, no obstacle remained
To using it; accordingly he took
An action with its actors, quite forsook
Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result — a creature, and, by one
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.
"Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!" Fond essay!
Piece after piece that armor broke away,
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language: thought may take perception's place

But hardly coexist in any case,
Being its mere presentment — of the whole
By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks
The crowd perception? painfully it tacks
Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,
Has rent perception into: it 's to clutch
And reconstruct — his office to diffuse,
Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a Muse
As to become Apollo. "For the rest,
E'en if some wondrous vehicle exprest
The whole dream, what impertinence in me
So to express it, who myself can be
The dream! nor, on the other hand, are those
I sing to, over-likely to suppose
A higher than the highest I present
Now, which they praise already: be content
Both parties, rather — they with the old verse,
And I with the old praise — far go, fare worse!"
A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings
The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings
Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps,
As might Apollo from the sudden corpse
Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.
He set to celebrating the exploits
Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.
Then came
The world's revenge: their pleasure, now his aim
Merely, — what was it? "Not to play the fool

So much as learn our lesson in your school!"
Replied the world. He found that, every time
He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,
His auditory recognized no jot
As he intended, and, mistaking not
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce
Sufficient to believe him — all, at once.
His will . . . conceive it caring for his will!
— Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still
How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,
Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)
His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept
To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept:
The true meed for true merit! — his abates
Into a sort he most repudiates,
And on them angrily he turns. Who were
The Mantuans, after all, that he should care
About their recognition, ay or no?
In spite of the convention months ago,
(Why blink the truth?) was not he forced to help
This same ungrateful audience, every whelp
Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers
With the bright band of old Goito years,
As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there
Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed
A fairy dust upon that multitude,
Although he feigned to take them by themselves;
His giants dignified those puny elves,

Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found
Himself still footing a delusive round,
Remote as ever from the self-display
He meant to compass, hampered every way
By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then
Continue, make believe to find in men
A use he found not?
Weeks, months, years went by;
And, lo, Sordello vanished utterly,
Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife
With each; one jarred against another life;
The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
Here, there; let slip no opportunities
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
To drop on him some no-time and acquit
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit—
That waiving any compromise between
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
Beyond most methods) — of incurring scoff
From the Man-portion not to be put off
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,
Though ne'er so bright; that sauntered forth in dream,
Drest any how, nor waited mystic frames,
Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
But just his sorry self— who yet might be
Sorrier for aught he in reality
Achieved, so pinioned That the Poet-part,
Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art

Developing his soul a thousand ways —
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze
The multitude with majesties, convince
Each sort of nature, that same nature's prince
Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew
Into a bravest of expedients, too;
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown
Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone
Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went
To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent —
So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge
Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge
A minute's toil that missed its due reward!
But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,
John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
That on the sea, with open in his hand
A bitter-sweetling of a book — was gone.
And if internal struggles to be one
That frittered him incessantly piecemeal,
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
Mantuans! intruding ever with some call
To action while he pondered, once for all,
Which looked the easier effort — to pursue
This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through
The present ill-appreciated stage
Of self-revealment, and compel the age
Know him; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake
From out his lethargy and nobly shake
Off timid habits of denial, mix

With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix
On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they cared
For his perplexity! Thus unprepared,
The obvious if not only shelter lay
In deeds, the dull conventions of his day
Prescribed the like of him: why not be glad
'T is settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,
Submits to this and that established rule?
Let Vidal change, or any other fool,
His murrey-colored robe for philamot,
And crop his hair; too skin-deep, is it not,
Such vigor? Then, a sorrow to the heart,
His talk! Whatever topics they might start,
Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess.
Only obliged to ask himself, "What was,"
A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
Itself into a period; answers whence
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped
At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,
They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock
Regaled him with, each talker from his stock
Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,
Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a practice which
He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained;

For. at conjecture how might words appear
To others, playing there what happened here,
And occupied abroad by what he spurned
At home, 't was slipt, the occasion he returned
To seize: he 'd strike that lyre adroitly — speech,
Would but a twenty-cubit plectre reach;
A clever hand, consummate instrument,
Were both brought close; each excellency went
For nothing else. The question Naddo asked,
Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust
And more! why move his soul, since move it must
At a minute's notice or as good it failed
To move at all? The end was, he retailed
Some ready-made opinion, put to use
This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce
Gestures and tones — at any folly caught
Serving to finish with, nor too much sought
If false or true 't was spoken; praise and blame
Of what he said grew pretty well the same
— Meantime awards to meantime acts: his soul,
Unequal to the compassing a whole,
Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive
About. And as for men in turn . . . contrive
Who could to take eternal interest
In them, so hate the worst, so love the best!
Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,
He hailed, decried the proper way.

As Man

So figured he; and how as Poet? Verse
Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,
That his poor piece of daily work to do
Was, not sink under any rivals; who
Loudly and loud enough, without these qualms,
Tuned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,
To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
"As knops that stud some almug to the pith
Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse
Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse
Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breeze" —
Gad-fly, that is. He might compete with these!
But — but —
"Observe a pompion-twine afloat;
Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat!
Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,
The entire surface of the pool to boot.
So could I pluck a cup, put in one song
A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,
Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.
How should externals satisfy my soul?"
"Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe"
(Hazarded Naddo) "finds; 'the man can't stoop
To sing us out,' quoth he, 'a mere romance;
He'd fain do better than the best, enhance
The subjects' rarity, work problems out
Therewith': now, you're a bard, a bard past doubt,
And no philosopher; why introduce

Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use
In poetry — which still must be, to strike,
Based upon common sense; there 's nothing like
Appealing to our nature! what beside
Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried
In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!
'The man,' said we, 'tells his own joys and woes —
We 'll trust him.' Would you have your songs endure?
Build on the human heart! — Why, to be sure
Yours is one sort of heart — but I mean theirs,
Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares
To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,
That 's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,
Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do
When they have got their calm! And is it true,
Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?
Perhaps! But these are matters one may probe
Too deeply for poetic purposes:
Rather select a theory that . . . yes,
Laugh! what does that prove? — stations you midway
And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,
That 's rank injustice done me! I restrict
The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked
Out of a host of warriors, statesman . . . did
I tell you? Very like! As well you hid
That sense of power, you have! True bards believe
All able to achieve what they achieve —
That is, just nothing — in one point abide
Profounder simpletons than all beside.

Oh, ay! The knowledge that you are a bard
Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!"
So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe
Of genius-haunters — how shall I describe
What grubs or nips, or rubs, or rips — your louse
For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,
Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,
Picking a sustenance from wear and tear
By implements it sedulous employs
To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise
Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude
At once! They settled stanchly; shame ensued:
Behold the monarch of mankind succumb
To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,
As Naddo styled it! 'T was not worth oppose
The matter of a moment, gainsay those
He aimed at getting rid of; better think
Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink
Back expeditiously to his safe place,
And chew the cud — what he and what his race
Were really, each of them. Yet even this
Conformity was partial. He would miss
Some point, brought into contact with them ere
Assured in what small segment of the sphere
Of his existence they attended him;
Whence blunders — falsehoods rectify — a grim
List — slur it over! How? If dreams were tried,
His will swayed sicklily from side to side,
Nor merely neutralized his waking act

But tended e'en in fancy to distract
The intermediate will, the choice of means.
He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan scenes
Supplied a baron, say, he sung before,
Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er
Of gallantries; "abjure the soul, content
With body, therefore!" Scarcely had he bent
Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast
Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast
And task it duly; by advances slight,
The simple stuff becoming composite,
Count Lori grew Apollo — best recall
His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul,
Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance
His gay apparel o'er; that countenance
Gathered his shattered fancy into one,
And, body clean abolished, soul alone
Sufficed the gray Paulician: by and by,
To balance the ethereality,
Passions were needed; foiled he sunk again.
Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('t is time explain)
Because a sudden sickness set it free
From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,
Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed; at once
A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
Blackened the valley. "I am sick too old,
Half crazed I think; what good 's the Kaiser's gold
To such an one? God help me! for I catch
My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch —

He bears that double breastplate on, they say,
So many minutes less than yesterday!
Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees
Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please
Exact a punishment for many things
You know, and some you never knew; which brings
To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix
And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
And Ecelin's betrothed; the Count himself
Must get my Palma: Ghibellin and Guelf
Mean to embrace each other." So began
Romano's missive to his fighting-man
Taurello — on the Tuscan's death, away
With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay
Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap
Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap
Startled him. "That accursed Vicenza! I
Absent, and she selects this time to die!
Ho, fellows, for Vicenza!" Half a score
Of horses ridden dead, he stood before
Romano in his reeking spurs: too late —
"Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,"
The chieftain stammered; "let me die in peace —
Forget me! Was it I e'er craved increase
Of rule? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst
Against the Father: as you found me first
So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma, sure,
Is at Goito still. Retain that lure —
Only be pacified!"

The country rung
With such a piece of news: on every tongue,
How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,
Had done a long day's service, so, might doff
The green and yellow, and recover breath
At Mantua, whither, — since Retrude's death,
(The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
From Otho's House, he carried to reside
At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
A structure worthy her imperial style,
The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine,
She never lived to see) — although his line
Was ancient in her archives and she took
A pride in him, that city, nor forsook
Her child when he forsook himself and spent
A prowess on Romano surely meant
For his own growth — whither he ne'er resorts
If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
Were shows to greet him. "Take a friend's advice,"
Quoth Naddo to Sordello, "nor be rash
Because your rivals (nothing can abash
Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best
To sound the great man's welcome; 't is a test,
Remember! Strojavacca looks asquint,
The rough fat sloven; and there 's plenty hint
Your pinions have received of late a shock —
Out-soar them, cobswan of the silver flock!
Sing well!" A signal wonder, song 's no whit
Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit;
Another day, Sordello finds, will bring
The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing;
So, a last shift, quits Mantua — slow, alone:
Out of that aching brain, a very stone,
Song must be struck. What occupies that front?
Just how he was more awkward than his wont
The night before, when Naddo, who had seen
Taurello on his progress, praised the mien
For dignity no crosses could affect —
Such was a joy, and might not he detect
A satisfaction if established joys
Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys
Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come
Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb
Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,
On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he went,
Yielding himself up as to an embrace.
The moon came out; like features of a face
A querulous fraternity of pines,
Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines
Also came out, made gradually up
The picture; 't was Goito's mountain-cup
And castle. He had dropped through one defile
He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile
Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapped
Him wholly. 'T was Apollo now they lapped,
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant
To wear his soul away in discontent,

Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain
Swelled; he expanded to himself again,
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail,
Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,
— Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret, —
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
And flung into the common court beside
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon
Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore, —
Since from the purpose, he maintained before,
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,
But more mysterious; gone to ruin — trails
Of vine through every loop-hole. Naught avails
The night as, torch in hand, he must explore
The maple chamber — did I say, its floor
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?
Worn now with gaps so large, there blew cold streams
Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear
Close and 't is like, one after one, you hear
In the blind darkness water drop. The nests
And nooks retained their long ranged vesture-chests
Empty and smelling of the iris-root
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,

Said the remaining women. Last, he lay
Beside the Carian group reserved and still.
The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,
Had been at the commencement proved unfit;
That for Reflecting, Demonstrating it,
Mankind — no fitter: was the Will Itself
In fault?
His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,
"I shall be king again!" as he withdrew
The envied scarf; into the font he threw
His crown.
Next day, no poet! "Wherefore?" asked
Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked
As devils, ended; "don't a song come next?"
The master of the pageant looked perplext
Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief.
"His Highness knew what poets were: in brief,
Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right
To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,
One must receive their nature in its length
And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength!"
— So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,
And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.

BOOK THE THIRD.

NATURE MAY TRIUMPH THEREFORE;

And the font took them: let our laurels lie!
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly
Because once more Goito gets, once more,
Sordello to itself! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew;
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue
That cheek's distortion! Nature's strict embrace,
Putting aside the Past, shall soon efface
Its print as well — factitious humors grown
Over the true — loves, hatreds not his own —
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,
Left welter where a trireme let it slip
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap; so the stain
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,
Its pleasure: how the tinct loosening escapes,
Cloud after cloud! Mantua's familiar shapes
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,
Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.
The last face glances through the eglantines,

The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines
Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought
To compass self-perception with, he sought
By forcing half himself — an insane pulse
Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse,
Never transmute — on human sights and sounds,
To watch the other half with; irksome bounds
It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed
Forever. Better sure be unrevealed
Than part-revealed: Sordello well or ill
Is finished: then what further use of Will,
A point in the prime idea not realized,
An oversight? inordinately prized,
No less, and pampered with enough of each
Delight to prove the whole above its reach.
"To need become all natures, yet retain
The law of my own nature — to remain
Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut, think,
Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,
Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs stanch
March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch!
Will and the means to show will, great and small,
Material, spiritual, — abjure them all
Save any so distinct, they may be left
To amuse, not tempt become! and, thus bereft,
Just as I first was fashioned would I be!
Nor, Moon, is it Apollo now, but me
Thou visitest to comfort and befriend!
Swim thou into my heart, and there an end,

Since I possess thee! — nay, thus shut mine eyes
And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise.
When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when
Out-standest: wherefore practise upon men
To make that plainer to myself?"
Slide here
Over a sweet and solitary year
Wasted: or simply notice change in him —
How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew dim
And satiate with receiving. Some distress
Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness
Under the imbecility, — naught kept
That down; he slept, but was aware he slept,
So, frustrated: as who brainsick made pact
Erst with the overhanging cataract
To deafen him, yet still distinguished slow
His own blood's measured clicking at his brow.
To finish. One declining Autumn day —
Few birds about the heaven chill and gray,
No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods —
He sauntered home complacently, their moods
According, his and Nature's. Every spark
Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark
The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung
Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue,
Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass
Singing at all; that faculty might class
With any of Apollo's now. The year
Began to find its early promise sere

As well. Thus beauty vanishes; thus stone
Outlingers flesh: Nature's and his youth gone,
They left the world to you, and wished you joy.
When, stopping his benevolent employ,
A presage shuddered through the welkin; harsh
The earth's remonstrance followed. 'T was the marsh
Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,
Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face,
And, where the mists broke up immense and white
I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light
Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.
And here was Nature, bound by the same bars
Of fate with him!
"No! youth once gone is gone:
Deeds let escape are never to be done.
Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year; for us —
Oh forfeit I unalterably thus
My chance? nor two lives wait me, this to spend
Learning save that? Nature has time to mend
Mistake, she knows occasion will recur —
Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her
With her magnificent resources? — I
Must perish once and perish utterly!
Not any strollings now at even-close
Down the field-path, Sordello! by thorn-rows
Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire
And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire
She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first
Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she durst

Answer 't was April! Linden-flower-time-long
Her eyes were on the ground; 't is July, strong
Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm
The woodside, here or by the village elm
That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat pale,
But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil
And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)
Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that endures
Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout
Of haggard ribalds wandering about
The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house
Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,
Parading, — to the gay Palermitans,
Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans
Nuocera holds, — those tall grave dazzling Norse,
High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,
Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,
He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,
The blind night seas without a saving star,
And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,
Sordello! — here, mollitious alcoves gilt
Superb as Byzant domes that devils built!
— Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go
Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,
Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,
Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,
Through vanquished Byzant where friends note for him
What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,
'T were fittest he transport to Venice' Square —

Flattered and promised life to touch them there
Soon, by his fervid sons of senators!
No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars —
Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be!
Points in the life I waited! what are ye
But roundels of a ladder which appeared
Awhile the very platform it was reared
To lift me on? — that happiness I find
Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind
Instinct which bade forego you all unless
Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness
Awaited me; the way life should be used
Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced
To teach it by a self-revealment, deemed
The very use, so long! Whatever seemed
Progress to that, was pleasure; aught that stayed
My reaching it — no pleasure. I have laid
The ladder down; I climb not; still, aloft
The platform stretches! Blisses strong and soft,
I dared not entertain, elude me; yet
Never of what they promised could I get
A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd
Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,
However slight, distinct from what they See,
However bounded: Happiness must be,
To feed the first by gleanings from the last,
Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
Become what they behold; such peace-in-strife
By transmutation, is the Use of Life,
The Alien turning Native to the soul

Or body — which instructs me; I am whole
There and demand a Palma; had the world
Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,
'T were Happiness to make it one with me —
Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,
Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend
In spirit now; and this done, what 's to blend
With? Naught is Alien in the world — my Will
Owns all already; yet can turn it still
Less Native, since my Means to correspond
With Will are so unworthy, 't was my bond
To tread the very joys that tantalize
Most now, into a grave, never to rise.
I die then! Will the rest agree to die?
Next Age or no? Shall its Sordello try
Clew after clew, and catch at last the clew
I miss? — that 's underneath my finger too,
Twice, thrice a day, perhaps, — some yearning traced
Deeper, some petty consequence embraced
Closer! Why fled I Mantua, then? — complained
So much my Will was fettered, yet remained
Content within a tether half the range
I could assign it? — able to exchange
My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and
Idle because I could thus understand —
Could e'en have penetrated to its core
Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,
Preferred elaborating in the dark
My casual stuff by any wretched spark

Born of my predecessors, though one stroke
Of mine had brought the flame forth! Mantua's yoke,
My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind,—
My own concernment — just to bring my mind
Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,
Each object suffered stifle in the mist
Which hazard, use and blindness could impose
In their relation to myself."

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs
Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,
Onward.

"Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops
Under a humid finger; while there fleets,
Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats
Never again! To be deposed — immured
Clandestinely — still petted, still assured
To govern were fatiguing work — the Sight
Fleeting meanwhile! 'T is noontide: wreak ere night
Somehow my will upon it, rather! Slake
This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take
That serves! A blasted bud displays you, torn,
Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;
But who divines what glory coats o'erclasp
Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's grasp
Taurello sent" . . .

"Taurello? Palma sent
Your Trouvere," (Naddo interposing leant

Over the lost bard's shoulder) — "and, believe,
You cannot more reluctantly receive
Than I pronounce her message: we depart
Together. What avail a poet's heart
Verona's pomps and gauds? five blades of grass
Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was,
On its mud-banks smoke fast rises after smoke
I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-broke.
O, the world's tidings! small your thanks, I guess,
For them. The father of our Patroness,
Has played Taurello an astounding trick,
Parts between Ecelin and Alberic
His wealth and goes into a convent: both
Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth
A week since at Verona: and they want
You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chant
Ere Richard storms Ferrara." Here was told
The tale from the beginning — how, made bold
By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had burned
And pillaged till he unawares returned
To take revenge: how Azzo and his friend
Were doing their endeavor, how the end
Of the siege was nigh, and how the Count, released
From further care, would with his marriage-feast
Inaugurate a new and better rule,
Absorbing thus Romano.

"Shall I school
My master," added Naddo, "and suggest
How you may clothe in a poetic vest

These doings, at Verona? Your response
To Palma! Wherefore jest? 'Depart at once?'
A good resolve! In truth, I hardly hoped
So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped
Out wisdom in the wilds here? — Thoughts may be
Over-poetical for poetry.
Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's neck;
And yet what spoils an orient like some speck
Of genuine white, turning its own white gray?
You take me? Curse the cicale!"

One more day.

One eve — appears Verona! Many a group,
(You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop
On lynx and ounce, was gathering — Christendom
Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from
The evening's purpose cheer or detriment,
Since Friedrich only waited some event
Like this, of Ghibellins establishing
Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King
Of Lombardy, he 'd glad descend there, wage
Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage
His barons from the burghers, and restore
The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore
By Hildebrand.

In the palace, each by each,
Sordello sat and Palma: little speech
At first in that dim closet, face with face
(Despite the tumult in the market-place)
Exchanging quick low laughters: now would rush

Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,
A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise —
But for the most part their two histories
Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.
And so the night flew on with its alarms
Till in burst one of Palma's retinue;
"Now, Lady!" gasped he. Then arose the two
And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.
A balcony lay black beneath until
Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, gray-haired men
Came on it and harangued the people: then
Sea-like that people surging to and fro
Shouted, "Hale forth the Carroch — trumpets, ho,
A flourish! run it in the ancient grooves —
Back from the bell! Hammer! that whom behooves
May hear the League is up! Peal! learn who list,
Verona means not be the first break tryst
To-morrow with the League!"
Enough. Now turn —
Over the eastern cypresses: discern —
Is any beacon set a-glimmer?
Rang
The air with shouts that overpowered the clang
Of the incessant carroch, even: "Haste —
The Candle 's at the gateway! ere it waste,
Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march
With Tiso Sampier through the eastern arch!"
Ferrara 's succored, Palma!
Once again

They sat together; some strange thing in train
To say, so difficult was Palma's place
In taking, with a coy fastidious grace
Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed.
But when she felt she held her friend indeed
Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant
Her lessons; telling of another want
Goito's quiet nourished than his own;
Palma — to serve, as him — be served, alone
Importing; Agnes' milk so neutralized
The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised
If, while Sordello fain had captive led
Nature, in dream was Palma wholly subjected
To some out-soul, which dawned not though she pined
Delaying till its advent, heart and mind,
Their life. "How dared I let expand the force
Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource
It grew for, should direct it? Every law
Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,
Must One determine whose corporeal shape
Would be no other than the prime escape
And revelation to me of a Will
Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable
Above, save at the point which, I should know,
Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow
So far, so much; as now it signified
Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my guide,
Whose mortal lip selected to declare
Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear;

— The first of intimations, whom to love;
The next, how love him. Seemed that orb, above
The castle-covert and the mountain-close,
Slow in appearing, — if beneath it rose
Cravings, aversions, — did our green precinct
Take pride in me, at unawares distinct
With this or that endowment, — how, represt
At once, such jetting power shrunk to the rest!
Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave
My spirit thence unfitted to receive
The consummating spell? — that spell so near
Moreover! 'Waits he not the waking year?
His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe
By this; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe
The thawed ravines; because of him, the wind
Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
Him now!'

And chief, that earnest April morn
Of Richard's Love-court, was it time, so worn
And white my cheek, so idly my blood beat,
Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet
And saying as she prompted; till outburst
One face from all the faces — not then first
I knew it; where in maple chamber glooms,
Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms
Advanced it ever? Men's acknowledgment
Sanctioned my own: 't was taken, Palma's bent, —
Sordello, accepted.

And the Tuscan dumb

Sat scheming, scheming. Ecelin would come
Gaunt, scared, ‘ Cesano baffles me,’ he ’d say:
‘ Better I fought it out, my father’s way!
Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,
And you and your Taurello yonder — what ’s
Romano’s business there?’ An hour’s concern
To cure the froward Chief! — induced return
Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes,
Wound up to persevere, — his enterprise
Marked out anew, its exigent of wit
Apportioned, — she at liberty to sit
And scheme against the next emergence, I —
To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly
Or fold the wing — to con your horoscope
For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope,
Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness
To blank smooth snow. What semblance of success
To any of my plans for making you
Mine and Romano’s? Break the first wall through,
Tread o’er the ruins of the Chief, supplant
His sons beside, still, vainest were the vaunt:
There, Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,
And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
Stayed me! But one wild eve that Lady died
In her lone chamber: only I beside:
Taurello far at Naples, and my sire
At Padua, Ecelin away in ire
With Alberic. She held me thus — a clutch
To make our spirits as our bodies touch —

And so began flinging the Past up, heaps
Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps
Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,
Fragments of many miserable schemes,
Secrets, more secrets, then — no, not the last —
'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the Past,
How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up her face
— All left of it, into one arch-grimace
To die with . . .
Friend, 't is gone! but not the fear
Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.
Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak,
When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak
— Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark! — for in
Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin
(How summoned, who divines?) — looking as if
He understood why Adelaide lay stiff
Already in my arms; for, 'Girl, how must
I manage Este in the matter thrust
Upon me, how unravel your bad coil? —
Since' (he declared) ''t is on your brow — a soil
Like hers, there!' then in the same breath, 'he lacked
No counsel after all, had signed no pact
With devils, nor was treason here or there,
Goito or Vicenza, his affair:
He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,
Would begin life afresh, now, — would not slave
For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake!
What booted him to meddle or to make

In Lombardy?' And afterward I knew
The meaning of his promise to undo
All she had done — why marriages were made,
New friendships entered on, old followers paid
With curses for their pains, — new friends' amaze
At height, when, passing out by Gate St. Blaise,
He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head
Over a friar's neck, — 'had vowed,' he said,
'Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife
And child were saved there, to bestow his life
On God, his gettings on the Church.'
Exiled
Within Goito, still one dream beguiled
My days and nights; 't was found, the orb I sought
To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut,
No other: but how serve it? — authorize
You and Romano mingle destinies?
And straight Romano's angel stood beside
Me who had else been Boniface's bride,
For Salinguerra 't was, with neck low bent,
And voice lightened to music, (as he meant
To learn not teach me,) who withdrew the pall
From the dead Past and straight revived it all,
Making me see how first Romano waxed,
Wherefore he waned now, why, if I relaxed
My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing effete,
Frayed by itself, unequal to complete
Its course, and counting every step astray
A gain so much. Romano, every way

Stable, a Lombard House now — why start back
Into the very outset of its track?
This patching-principle which late allied
Our House with other Houses — what beside
Concerned the apparition, the first Knight
Who followed Conrad hither in such plight
His utmost wealth was summed in his one steed?
For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed
A task, in the beginning hazardous
To him as ever task can be to us;
But did the weather-beaten thief despair
When first our crystal cincture of warm air, —
That binds the Trevisan, — as its spice-belt
(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt, —
Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face —
Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard grace?
Tried he at making surer aught made sure,
Maturing what already was mature?
No; his heart prompted Ecelo, 'Confront
Este, inspect yourself. What's nature? Wont.
Discard three-parts your nature, and adopt
The rest as an advantage!' Old strength propped
The man who first grew Podestà among
The Vincentines, no less than, while there sprung
His palace up in Padua like a threat,
Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet
In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained,
Romano was established — has remained —
For are you not Italian, truly peers

With Este? 'Azzo' better soothes our ears
Than 'Alberic?' or is this lion's-crine
From over-mounts' (this yellow hair of mine)
'So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?'
(Thus went he on with something of a mock)
'Wherefore recoil, then, from the very fate
Conceded you, refuse to imitate
Your model farther? Este long since left
Being mere Este: as a blade its heft,
Este required the Pope to further him:
And you, the Kaiser — whom your father's whim
Foregoes or, better, never shall forego
If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo
Commenced, but Ecelin desists from: just
As Adelaide of Susa could intrust
Her donative, — her Piedmont given the Pope,
Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope
'Twixt France and Italy, — to the superb
Matilda's perfecting, — so, lest aught curb
Our Adelaide's great counter-project for
Giving her Trentine to the Emperor
With passage here from Germany, — shall you
Take it, — my slender plodding talent, too!'
— Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

He

As Patron of the scattered family
Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit
Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit
Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,

'Nothing remains,' Taurello said, 'but wait
Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,
As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink
From losing Palma: judge if we advance,
Your father's method, your inheritance!'
That day I was betrothed to Boniface
At Padua by Taurello's self, took place
The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,
That day I sought Verona with the train
Agreeed for, — by Taurello's policy
Convicting Richard of the fault, since we
Were present to annul or to confirm, —
Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,
Quitted Verona for the siege.
And now
What glory may engird Sordello's brow
Through this? A month since at Oliero slunk
All that was Ecelin into a monk;
But how could Salinguerra so forget
His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet
One effort to recover him? He sent
Forthwith the tidings of this last event
To Ecelin — declared that he, despite
The recent folly, recognized his right
To order Salinguerra: 'Should he wring
Its uttermost advantage out, or fling
This chance away? Or were his sons now Head
Of the House?' Through me Taurello's missive spe[illegible]:
My father's answer will by me return.

Behold! 'For him,' he writes, 'no more concern
With strife than, for his children, with fresh plots
Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots
For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,
Nor Ecelin impose.' Lest this unnerve
Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip
Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip, —
I, in his sons' default (who, mating with
Este, forsake Romano as the frith
Its mainsea for the firmland, sea makes head
Against) I stand, Romano, — in their stead
Assume the station they desert, and give
Still, as the Kaiser's representative,
Taurello license he demands. Midnight —
Morning — by noon to-morrow, making light
Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed
Like yours, disguised together, may precede
The arbitrators to Ferrara: reach
Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach
The rest! then say if I have misconceived
Your destiny, too readily believed
The Kaiser's cause your own!"

And Palma's fled.

Though no affirmative disturbs the head,
A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,
Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,
Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be
Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,
Soul of this body — to wield this aggregate

Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
Though he should live — a centre of disgust
Even — apart, core of the outward crust
He vivified, assimilated. Thus
I bring Sordello to the rapturous
Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round
Of life was quite accomplished; and he found
Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,
Is insufficient to its own delight,
Both in corporeal organs and in skill
By means of such to body forth its Will —
And, after, insufficient to apprise
Men of that Will, oblige them recognize
The Hid by the Revealed — but that, the last
Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,
His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void
The throne, might sit there, suffer be enjoyed
Mankind, a varied and divine array
Incapable of homage, the first way,
Nor fit to render incidentally
Tribute connived at, taken by the by,
In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind
The ignominious exile of mankind —
Whose proper service, ascertained intact
As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,
Not watch Sordello acting each of them)
Was to secure — if the true diadem
Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank
The wisdom of that golden Palma, — thank

Verona's Lady in her Citadel
Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell:
And truly when she left him, the sun reared
A head like the first clamberer's that peered
A-top the Capitol, his face on flame
With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.
Nor slight too much my rhymes — that spring, dispread,
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels! Rather say,
My transcendental platan! mounting gay
(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)
With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen
Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon
With colored buds, then glowing like the moon
One mild flame, — last a pause, a burst, and all
Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,
Ending the weird work prosecuted just
For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,
Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark
Apart —
Yet not so, surely never so!
Only, as good my soul were suffered go
O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside
Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide
Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute
For myriad ages as we men compute,
Returning into it without a break
O' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake
O'er the lagune.

Sordello said once, "Note,
In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote
With heart and soul and strength, for he believed
Himself achieving all to be achieved
By singer — in such songs you find alone
Completeness, judge the song and singer one,
And either's purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him: while from true works (to wit
Sordello's dream-performances that will
Be never more than dreamed) escapes there still
Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath
The life his song exhibits, this a sheath
To that; a passion and a knowledge far
Transcending these, majestic as they are,
Smouldered; his lay was but an episode
In the bard's life: which evidence you owed
To some slight weariness, some looking-off
Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff
In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed divine
In every point except one silly line
About the restiff daughters!) — what may lurk
In that? 'My life commenced before that work,
(Thus I interpret the significance
Of the bard's start aside and look askance)
'My life continues after: on I fare
With no more stopping, possibly, no care
To note the undercurrent, the why and how,
Where, when, of the deeper life, as thus just now.
But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas

For you! who sigh, 'When shall it come to pass
We read that story? How will he compress
The future gains, his life's true business,
Into the better lay which — that one flout,
Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out —
Engrosses him already, though professed
To meditate with us eternal rest,
And partnership in all his life has found?
'T is but a sailor's promise, weather-bound:
'Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be moored
For once, the awning stretched, the poles assured!
Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash,
Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,
The margin 's silent: out with every spoil
Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,
This serpent of a river to his head
I' the midst! Admire each treasure, as we spread
The bank, to help us tell our history
Aright: give ear, endeavor to descry
The groves of giant rushes, how they grew
Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,
What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent
Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went
Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest
The springing of a land-wind from the West!'
— 'Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day!
To-morrow, and the pageant 's moved away
Down to the poorest tent-pole: we and you
Part company: no other may pursue

Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate
Intends, if triumph or decline await
The tempter of the everlasting steppe.'
I muse this on a ruined palace-step
At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit
Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit
England gave birth to? Who 's adorable
Enough reclaim a —— no Sordello's Will
Alack! — be queen to me? That Bassanese
Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These
Perhaps from our delicious Asolo
Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico
Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves
To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves
Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath
The cool arch stoops she, brownest-cheek! Her wreath
Endures a month — a half-month — if I make
A queen of her, continue for her sake
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl
Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl
In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed
Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post
For gondolas.
You sad dishevelled ghost
That pluck at me and point, are you advised
I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised
— Jewels in the locks that love no crownet like
Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike,

So fair! — who left this end of June's turmoil,
Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free
In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)
Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess
There is such niggard stock of happiness
To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,
One labors ineffectually to stretch
It o'er you so that mother and children, both
May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!
Divide the robe yet farther: be content
With seeing just a score pre-eminent
Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,
Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights —
For, these in evidence, you clearlier claim
A like garb for the rest, — grace all, the same
As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength
And health for each of you, not more — at length
Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race
Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,
And all be dizened out as chiefs and bards.
But in this magic weather one discards
Much old requirement — Venice seems a type
Of Life, — 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,
As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt naught and naught
'T is Venice, and 't is Life — as good you sought
To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone,
Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
As hinder Life the evil with the good

Which make up Living, rightly understood.
Only, do finish something! Peasants or queens,
Take them, made happy by whatever means,
Parade them for the common credit, vouch
That a luckless residue, we send to crouch
In corners out of sight, was just as framed
For happiness, its portion might have claimed
As well, and so, obtaining it, had stalked
Fastuous as any! — such my project, balked
Already; I hardly venture to adjust
The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust
Me! — nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,
Have the true knack of tiring suitors out
With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes
Inveterately tear-shot — there, be wise
Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant
You insult! Shall your friend (not slave) be shent
For speaking home? Beside, care-bit, erased,
Broken-up beauties ever took my taste
Supremely, and I love you more, far more
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor.
Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where
A whisper came, "Let others seek! — thy care
Is found, thy life's provision; if thy race
Should be thy mistress, and into one face
The many faces crowd?" Ah, had I, judge,
Or no, your secret? Rough apparel — grudge
All ornaments save tag or tassel worn
To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn —

Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
Alone (that 's saddest but it must be so)
Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,
Aught desultory or undignified, —
Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass
Or not each formidable group, the mass
Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
God's great day of the Corpus Domini)
And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
Come timid up to me for alms? And then
The luxury to hesitate, feign do
Some unexampled grace! — when, whom but you
Dare I bestow your own upon? And here
Further before you say, it is to sneer
I call you ravishing; for I regret
Little that she, whose early foot was set
Forth as she 'd plant it on a pedestal,
Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall
Toward me — no wreath, only a lip's unrest
To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange
Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,
My love! warped souls and bodies! yet God spoke
Of right-hand, foot and eye — selects our yoke,
Sordello, as your poetship may find!
So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind
Their foolish talk; we 'll manage reinstate
Your old worth; ask moreover, when they prate
Of evil men past hope, "don't each contrive,

Despite the evil you abuse, to live? —
Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,
His own conceit of truth? to which he hies
By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,
But to himself not inaccessible;
He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd
Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed
His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch
One pleasure from a multitude of such
Denied him." Then assert, "all men appear
To think all better than themselves, by here
Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really," say,
"All men think all men stupider than they,
Since, save themselves, no other comprehends
The complicated scheme to make amends
— Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance,
Good labors to exist." A slight advance, —
Merely to find the sickness you die through,
And naught beside! but if one can't eschew
One's portion in the common lot, at least
One can avoid an ignorance increased
Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint
How naught were like dispensing without stint
The water of life — so easy to dispense
Beside, when one has probed the centre whence
Commotion 's born — could tell you of it all!
"— Meantime, just meditate my madrigal
O' the mugwort that conceals a dew-drop safe!"
What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,

Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin
The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,
A hungry sun above us, sands that bung
Our throats, — each dromedary lolls a tongue,
Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,
And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,
And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,
— Remark, you wonder any one needs choke
With founts about! Potsherd him, Gibeonites!
While awkwardly enough your Moses smites
The rock, though he forego his Promised Land,
Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and
Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah
Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah!
Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,
Recall — not that I prompt ye — who explained . . .
"Presumptuous!" interrupts one. You, not I
'T is, brother, marvel at and magnify
Such office: "office," quotha? can we get
To the beginning of the office yet?
What do we here? simply experiment
Each on the other's power and its intent
When elsewhere tasked, — if this of mine were trucked
For yours to either's good, — we watch construct,
In short, an engine: with a finished one,
What it can do, is all, — naught, how 't is done.
But this of ours yet in probation, dusk
A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk
Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;

Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's
Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,
Make out each other more or less precise —
The scope of the whole engine 's to be proved;
We die: which means to say, the whole 's removed,
Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin, —
To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.
And then, I grant you, it behooves forget
How 't is done — all that must amuse us yet
So long: and, while you turn upon your heel,
Pray that I be not busy slitting steel
Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore
Under a cluster of fresh stars, before
I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do!
So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,
At present, and a weary while to come,
The office of ourselves, — nor blind nor dumb,
And seeing somewhat of man's state, — has been,
For the worst of us, to say they so have seen;
For the better, what it was they saw; the best
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:
" So that I glance," says such an one, " around,
And there 's no face but I can read profound
Disclosures in; this stands for hope, that — fear,
And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here!
' Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts
O'erarch, will blind thee! said I not? she shuts

Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet!
Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,
Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore
Thy sweet shape, Zanze! therefore stoop!'
'That's truth!'
(Adjudge you) 'the incarcerated youth
Would say that!'
'Youth? Plara the bard? Set down
That Plara spent his youth in a grim town
Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about
The minster for protection, never out
Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.
The brighter shone the suburb, — all the more
Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof
Of any chance escape of joy, — some roof,
Taller than they, allowed the rest detect
Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect
Who could, 't was meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's
Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped both peaks
Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,
Then sunk, a hugh flame on its socket's edge,
With leavings on the gray glass oriel-pane
Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain —
The minster minded that! in heaps the dust
Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,
Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail
In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale.'
'Exact the town, the minster and the street!'

'As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:
Lust triumphs and is gay, Love 's triumphed o'er
And sad: but Lucio 's sad. I said before,
Love's sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be
As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe:
'T is of the mood itself I speak, what tinge
Determines it, else colorless, — or mirth,
Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth.'
'Ay, that 's the variation's gist!' Indeed?
Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!
And having seen too what I saw, be bold
And next encounter what I do behold
(That 's sure) but bid you take on trust! Attack
The use and purpose of such sights? Alack,
Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense
On Salinguerras praise in preference
To the Sordellos: men of action, these!
Who, seeing just as little as you please,
Yet turn that little to account, — engage
With, do not gaze at, — carry on, a stage,
The work o' the world, not merely make report
The work existed ere their day! In short,
When at some future no-time a brave band
Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand
In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where 's the hurt
Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,
At whose defection mortals stare aghast
As though heaven's bounteous windows were slammed fast

Incontinent? whereas all you, beneath,
Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their teeth
Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you:
And therefore have I moulded, made anew
A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,
Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,
Have ye times, places, actors of your own?
Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,
And then — ah then! If Hercules first parched
His foot in Egypt only to be marched
A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
What chance have I? The demigod was mute
Till, at the altar, where time out of mind
Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined
His forehead long enough, and he began
Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.
Take not affront, my gentle audience! whom
No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,
Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet rend —
That's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-friend,
Whose great verse blares unintermittent on
Like your own trumpeter at Marathon, —
You who, Platæas and Salamis being scant,
Put up with Ætna for a stimulant —
And did well, I acknowledged, as he loomed
Over the midland sea last month, presumed
Long, lay demolished in the blazing West
At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets prest
Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear

A crest proud as desert while I declare
Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring
Tears of its color from that painted king
Who lost it, I would, for that smile which went
To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
Wearing your verse in place, an amulet
Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret!
My English Eyebright, if you are not glad
That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad
Disheveled form, wherein I put mankind
To come at times and keep my pact in mind,
Renewed me, — hear no crickets in the hedge,
Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge
At home, and may the summer showers gush
Without a warning from the missel thrush!
So, to our business, now — the fate of such
As find our common nature — overmuch
Despised because restricted and unfit
To bear the burden they impose on it —
Cling when they would discard it; craving strength
To leap from the allotted world, at length
They do leap, — flounder on without a term,
Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ
In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .
But that 's the story — dull enough, confess!
There might be fitter subjects to allure;
Still, neither misconceive my portraiture
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint:
What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.

Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,
Then say if you condemn me or acquit.
John the Beloved, banished Antioch
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock
Farewell, but set apart the closing eve
To comfort those his exile most would grieve,
He knew: a touching spectacle, that house
In motion to receive him! Xanthus' spouse
You missed, made panther's meat a month since; but
Xanthus himself (his nephew 't was, they shut
'Twixt boards and sawed asunder) Polycarp,
Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp
To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest
Were ranged; thro' whom the gray disciple prest,
Busily blessing right and left, just stopt
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropt
Soon after, reached the portal — on its hinge
The door turns and he enters — what quick twinge
Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix
Whereon, why like some spectral candlestick's
Branch the disciple's arms? Dead swooned he, woke
Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp, heart-broke,
"Get thee behind me, Satan! have I toiled
To no more purpose? is the gospel foiled
Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,
Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth —
Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled
To see the — the — the Devil domiciled?"
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, "Father, 't is yourself

Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf
Went to procure against to-morrow's loss;
And that 's no twy-prong, but a pastoral cross,
You 're painted with!" His puckered brows unfold —
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEN SUFFERED MUCH,

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case;
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms
They tugged for — one discovering that to twist
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist
Secured a point of vantage — one, how best
He 'd parry that by planting in her breast
His elbow-spike — each party too intent
For noticing, howe'er the battle went,
The conqueror would but have a corpse to kiss.
"May Boniface be duly damned for this!"
— Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth:
"A boon, sweet Christ — let Salinguerra seethe
In hell forever, Christ, and let myself
Be there to laugh at him!" — moaned some young Guelf
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast
To the charred lintel of the doorway, last
His father stood within to bid him speed.
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed
— Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man plants.

The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,
And ask the purpose of a sumptuous train
Admitted on a morning; every town
Of the East League was come by envoy down
To treat for Richard's ransom: here you saw
The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross
On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
After the flock of steeples he might spy
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago
To mend the ramparts — sure the laggards know
The Pope 's as good as here! They paced the streets
More soberly. At last, "Taurello greets
The League," announced a pursuivant, — "will match
Its courtesy, and labors to despatch
At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent
On pressing matters from his post at Trent,
With Mainard Count of Tyrol, — simply waits
Their going to receive the delegates."
"Tito!" Our delegates exchanged a glance,
And, keeping the main way, admired askance
The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
Couched like a king each on its bank of earth —
Arbalist, manganel, and catapult;
While stationed by, as waiting a result,
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased
Working to watch the strangers. "This, at least,

Were better spared; he scarce presumes gainsay
The League's decision! Get our friend away
And profit for the future: how else teach
Fools 't is not safe to stray within claw's reach
Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown?
Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone.
Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare?"
The carrochs halted in the public square.
Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,
Men prattled, freelier that the crested gaunt
White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak
Was missing, and whoever chose might speak
Ecelin boldly out: so, — "Ecelin
Needed his wife to swallow half the sin
And sickens by himself: the Devil's whelp,
He styles his son, dwindles away, no help
From conserves, your fine triple-curded froth
Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth —
Eh? Jubilate! Peace! no little word
You utter here that 's not distinctly heard
Up at Oliero: he was absent sick
When we besieged Bassano — who, i' the thick
O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo made,
Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide?
She managed it so well that, night by night,
At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite
First fresh, pale by and by without a wound,
And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swound,
They knew the place was taken. Ominous

That Ghibellins should get what cautelous
Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench
Vainly; Saint George contrived his town a trench
O' the marshes, an impermeable bar.
Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar
Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon
His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion.
What now? The founts! God's bread, touch not a [plank!
A crawling hell of carrion — every tank
Choke full! — found out just now to Cino's cost —
The same who gave Taurello up for lost,
And, making no account of fortune's freaks,
Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks
Back now with Concorezzi — 'faith! they drag
Their carroch to San Vital, plant the flag
On his own palace so adroitly razed
He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed
And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air —
Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care —
Seats himself on the tank's edge — will begin
To hum, *za, za, Cavaler Ecelin* —
A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,
Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,
At last, *za, za,* and up with a fierce kick
Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick
Gray hair about his spur!"
Which means, they lift
The covering, Salinguerra made a shift
To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid

Further disclosures; leave them thus employed.
Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,
And poor Ferrara puts a softened face
On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall
Bastioned within by trees of every sort
On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short,
— Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,
The fig-tree reared itself, — but stark and cramped,
Made fools of, like tamed lions; whence, on the edge,
Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge
Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,
Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof
Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide
Down to a grassy space level and wide,
Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees
Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,
Set by itself: and in the centre spreads,
Born upon three uneasy leopards' heads,
A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt
Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
With trees leave off on either hand; pursue
Your path along a wondrous avenue
Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,
With aloes leering everywhere, gray-grown
From many a Moorish summer: how they wind
Out of the fissures! likelier to bind
The building than those rusted cramps which drop
Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,

You fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the pride
Or else despair of the whole country-side —
A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,
God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek rough-rasps
In crumbling Naples marble! meant to look
Like those Messina marbles Constance took
Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed
To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,
A certain font with caryatides
Since cloistered at Goito; only, these
Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop
Able to right themselves — who see you, stoop
O' the instant after you their arms! Unplucked
By this or that, you pass, for they conduct
To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,
Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien
Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle
No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-while,
Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood
For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood
Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,
Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir
Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
At the announcement of his over-match
To wind the day's diversion up, despatch
The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs one heap,
The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap
Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car

Clove dizzily the solid of the war
— Let coil about his knees for pride in him.
We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim
San Pietro Palace stops us.
Such the state
Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate
Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife
Retrude still might lead her ancient life
In her new home — whereat enlarged so much
Neighbors upon the novel princely touch
He took, — who here imprisons Boniface.
Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace;
And here, emerging from the labyrinth
Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth
Of the door-pillar.
He had really left.
Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft
From the morass) where Este's camp was made;
The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade —
All had been seen by him, but scarce as when,
Eager for cause to stand aloof from men
At every point save the fantastic tie
Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,
He made account of such. A crowd, — he meant
To task the whole of it; each part's intent
Concerned him therefore: and, the more he pried,
The less became Sordello satisfied
With his own figure at the moment. Sought
He respite from his task? descried he aught

Novel in the anticipated sight
Of all these livers upon all delight?
This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,
Whereby he still had imaged that mankind
His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,
His age — in plans to prove at least such thing
Had been so dreamed, — which now he must impress
With his own will, effect a happiness
By theirs, — supply a body to his soul
Thence, and become eventually whole
With them as he had hoped to be without —
Made these the mankind he once raved about?
Because a few of them were notable,
Should all be figured worthy note? As well
Expect to find Taurello's triple line
Of trees a single and prodigious pine.
Real pines rose here and there; but, close among,
Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng
Of shrubs, he saw, — a nameless common sort
O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report
And hurried into corners, or at best
Admitted to be fancied like the rest.
Reckon that morning's proper chiefs — how few!
And yet the people grew, the people grew,
Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
More left behind and most who should succeed, —
Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,
Petty enjoyments and huge miseries, —
Mingled with, and made veritably great

Those chiefs: he overlooked not Mainard's state
Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead
Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head
Of infinite and absent Tyrolese
Or Paduans; startling all the more, that these
Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,
"Yet doubtless on the whole" (quoth Eglamor)
"Smiling — for if a wealthy man decays
And out of store of robes must wear, all days,
One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,
'T is commonly some tarnished gay brocade
Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more:
Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store
Of looks is fain to upgather, keep unfurled
For common wear as she goes through the world,
The faint remainder of some worn-out smile
Meant for a feast-night's service merely." While
Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus, —
(Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
Much less dispute, life's joys with one employed
In envying them, — or, if they aught enjoyed,
Where lingered something indefinable
In every look and tone, the mirth as well
As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
Of the result, their good or bad estate) —
Old memories returned with new effect:
And the new body, ere he could suspect,
Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,
The new self seemed impatient to be used

By him, but utterly another way
To that anticipated: strange to say,
They were too much below him, more in thrall
Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
What booted scattered units? — here a mind
And there, which might repay his own to find,
And stamp, and use? — a few, howe'er august,
If all the rest were grovelling in the dust?
No: first a mighty equilibrium, sure,
Should he establish, privilege procure
For all, the few had long possessed! he felt
An error, an exceeding error melt —
While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,
Behooved him think of men, and take their wants,
Such as he now distinguished every side,
As his own want which might be satisfied, —
And, after that, think of rare qualities
Of his own soul demanding exercise.
It followed naturally, through no claim
On their part, which made virtue of the aim
At serving them, on his, — that, past retrieve,
He felt now in their toils, theirs — nor could leave
Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,
Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool!)
Had never even entertained the thought
That this his last arrangement might be fraught
With incidental good to them as well,
And that mankind's delight would help to swell
His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly

Because the merry time of life must fleet,
'T was deeplier now, — for could the crowds repeat
Their poor experiences? His hand that shook
Was twice to be deplored. "The Legate, look!
With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread,
Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,
Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long while
That owner of the idiotic smile
Serves them!" He fortunately saw in time
His fault however, and since the office prime
Includes the secondary — best accept
Both offices; Taurello, its adept,
Could teach him the preparatory one,
And how to do what he had fancied done
Long previously, ere take the greater task.
How render first these people happy? ask
The people's friends: for there must be one good,
One way to it — the Cause! — he understood
The meaning now of Palma; why the jar
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope
And Rome's despair? — 'twixt Emperor and Pope
The confused shifting sort of Eden tale —
Still hardihood recurring, still to fail —
That foreign interloping fiend, this free
And native overbrooding deity —
Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms
The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the calms
Of Paradise — or, on the other hand,

The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,
One snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,
Whose heavy length breaks in the noon profound
Some saving tree — which needs the Kaiser, drest
As the dislodging angel of that pest,
Then — yet that pest bedropt, flat head, full fold,
With coruscating dower of dyes. "Behold
The secret, so to speak, and master-spring
Of the contest! which of the two Powers shall bring
Men good — perchance the most good — ay, it may
Be that! the question, which best knows the way."
And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past
Out of San Pietro; never seemed the last
Of archers, slingers: and our friend began
To recollect strange modes of serving man —
Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,
And more. "This way of theirs may, — who can tell? —
Need perfecting," said he: "let all be solved
At once! Taurello 't is, the task devolved
On late — confront Taurello!"
And at last
He did confront him. Scarcely an hour past
When forth Sordello came, older by years
Than at his entry. Unexampled fears
Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute
And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,
Into Ferrara — not the empty town
That morning witnessed: he went up and down
Streets whence the veil had been stripped shred by shred,

So that, in place of huddling with their dead
Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
Its folk made shift to crawl forth, sit like friends
With any one. A woman gave him choice
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice
Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat
Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat —
Its blue cross and eight lilies, — bade beware
One dogging him in concert with the pair
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.
Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,
They kindled great fires while the Leaguer's mass
Began at every carroch — he must pass
Between the kneeling people. Presently
The carroch of Verona caught his eye
With purple trappings; silently he bent
Over its fire, when voices violent
Began, "Affirm not whom the youth was like
That, striking from the porch, I did not strike
Again; I too have chestnut hair; my kin
Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.
Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away! sing! take
My glove for guerdon!" and for that man's sake
He turned: "A song of Eglamor's!" — scarce named,
When, "Our Sordello's, rather!" all exclaimed;
"Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme?"
He had been happy to deny, this time, —
Profess as heretofore the aching head
And failing heart, — suspect that in his stead

Some true Apollo had the charge of them,
Was champion to reward or to condemn,
So his intolerable risk might shift
Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift
Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the close —
"I made that," said he to a youth who rose
As if to hear: 't was Palma through the band
Conducted him in silence by her hand.

Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent
Gave place to Palma and her friend; who went
In turn at Montelungo's visit — one
After the other were they come and gone, —
These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,
This incarnation of the People's hope,
Sordello, — all the say of each was said,
And Salinguerra sat, himself instead
Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.
'T was a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set
In order for the morning's use; full face,
The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,
The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely blacked
With ochre on the naked wall; nor lacked
Romano's green and yellow either side;
But the new token Tito brought had tried
The Legate's patience — nay, if Palma knew
What Salinguerra almost meant to do
Until the sight of her restored his lip
A certain half-smile, three months' chieftainship
Had banished! Afterward, the Legate found

No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound
And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief
Silent as when our couple left, whose brief
Encounter wrought so opportune effect
In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject.
Though time 't was now if ever, to pause — fix
On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks
Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,
Just managed to be hindered crashing down —
His last sound troops ranged — care observed to post
His best of the maimed soldiers innermost —
So much was plain enough, but somehow struck
Him not before. And now with this strange luck
Of Tito's news, rewarding his address
So well, what thought he of? — how the success
With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush
Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush
To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt
Himself from telling what there was to tempt?
No: that this minstrel was Romano's last
Servant — himself the first! Could he contrast
The whole! that minstrel's thirty years just spent
In doing naught, their notablest event
This morning's journey hither, as I told —
Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,
A stammering awkward man that scarce dared raise
His eye before the magisterial gaze —
And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes
Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,

Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say,
'T was a youth nonchalantly looked away
Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick
Expostulating trees — so agile, quick
And graceful turned the head on the broad chest
Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest.
Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire
Across the room; and, loosened of its tire
Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown
Large massive locks discolored as if a crown
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where
A sharp white line divided clean the hair;
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
Curling and fine about a brow thus kept
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound:
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,
Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,
No lion more; two vivid eyes, enchased
In hollows filled with many a shade and streak
Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek;
Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed
A lip supremely perfect else — unwarmed,
Unwidened, less or more; indifferent
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train
As now a period was fulfilled again;
Of such, a series made his life, compressed
In each, one story serving for the rest —
How his life-streams rolling arrived at last

At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast,
They would emerge, a river to the end, —
Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate befriend,
Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,
Then fell back to oblivion infinite:
Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds
Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,
Had gained him an occasion, That above,
That eagle, testified he could improve
Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay
Beside his rescript, a new badge by way
Of baldric; while, — another thing that marred
Alike emprise, achievement and reward, —
Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.
What past life did those flying thoughts pursue?
As his, few names in Mantua half so old;
But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled
It latterly, the Adelardi spared
No pains to rival them: both factions shared
Ferrara, so that, counted out, 't would yield
A product very like the city's shield,
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Guelf,
As after Salinguerra styled himself
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,
(Last of the Adelardi) — never tried
His fortune there: with Marchesalla's child
Would pass, — could Blacks and Whites be reconciled
And young Taurello wed Linguetta, — wealth
And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by stealth

Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese
Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gone! Men's first dismay
Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay
The after indignation, Boniface,
This Richard's father. "Learn the full disgrace
Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate
Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate
That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors —
Ay, Azzo's — who, not privy to, abhors
Our step — but we were zealous." Azzo 's then
To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:
"Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,
What if we change our ruler and decoy
The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere,
With Italy to build in, fix him here,
Settle the city's troubles in a trice?
For private wrong, let public good suffice!"
In fine, young Salinguerra's stanchest friends
Talked of the townsmen making him amends,
Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was
Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass
A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,
Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again
In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;
Count Boniface rode smirking at their side:
"She brings him half Ferrara," whispers flew,
"And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!"
Anon the stripling was in Sicily

The rest of Lombardy, — not as before
By an instinctive truculence, but patched
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means.
"Only, why is it Salinguerra screens
Himself behind Romano? — him we bade
Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the shade!"
— Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tardiest
To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced
At once in the arrangement; reasoned, plied
His friend with offers of another bride,
A statelier function — fruitlessly: 't was plain
Taurello through some weakness must remain
Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both,
— Ecelin the unready, harsh and loath,
And this more plausible and facile wight
With every point a-sparkle — chose the right,
Admiring how his predecessors harped
On the wrong man: "thus," quoth he, "wits are warped
By outsides!" Carelessly, meanwhile, his life
Suffered its many turns of peace and strife
In many lands — you hardly could surprise
The man; — who shamed Sordello (recognize!)
In this as much beside, that, unconcerned
What qualities were natural or earned,
With no ideal of graces, as they came
He took them, singularly well the same —
Speaking the Greek's own language, just because

Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws
In contracts with him; while, since Arab lore
Holds the stars' secret — take one trouble more
And master it! 'T is done, and now deter
Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,
From Friedrich's path! — Friedrich, whose pilgrimage
The same man puts aside, whom he 'll engage
To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,
Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis' church
And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece
Which, lend Taurello credit, rivals Greece —
Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits
Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits.
For elegance, he strung the angelot,
Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove he not
Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper? Why
Detail you thus a varied mastery
But to show how Taurello, on the watch
For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch
Their capabilities and purposes,
Displayed himself so far as displayed these:
While our Sordello only cared to know
About men as a means whereby he 'd show
Himself, and men had much or little worth
According as they kept in or drew forth
That self; Taurello's choicest instruments
Surmised him shallow.

Meantime, malecontents
Dropped off, town after town grew wiser. "How

Change the world's face?" asked people; "as 't is now
It has been, will be ever: very fine
Subjecting things profane to things divine,
In talk! this contumacy will fatigue
The vigilance of Este and the League!
The Ghibellins gain on us!" — as it happed.
Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped
By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space
Slept at Verona: either left a brace
Of sons — but, three years after, either's pair
Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:
Azzo remained and Richard — all the stay
Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay
As 't were. Then, either Ecelin grew old
Or his brain altered — not of the proper mould
For new appliances — his old palm-stock
Endured no influx of strange strengths. He 'd rock
As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low
As proud of the completeness of his woe,
Then weep real tears; — now make some mad onslaught
On Este, heedless of the lesson taught
So painfully, — now cringe for peace, sue peace
At price of past gain, — much more, fresh increase
To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last
Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.
And men remarked these freaks of peace and war
Happened while Salinguerra was afar:
Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,
To use his old adherent's wits again.

Not he! — "who had advisers in his sons,
Could plot himself, nor needed any one's
Advice." 'T was Adelaide's remaining stanch
Prevented his destruction root and branch
Forthwith; but when she died, doom fell, for gay
He made alliances, gave lands away
To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew
Forever from the world. Taurello, who
Was summoned to the convent, then refused
A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,
Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.
Soon a few movements of the happier sort
Changed matters, put himself in men's report
As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,
And that became him ever. So, in pride
And flushing of this kind of second youth,
He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth
Lay prone — and men remembered, somewhat late,
A laughing old outrageous stifled hate
He bore to Este — how it would outbreak
At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake
In sunny weather — as that noted day
When with his hundred friends he tried to slay
Azzo before the Kaiser's face: and how,
On Azzo's calm refusal to allow
A liegeman's challenge, straight he too was calmed:
As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,
Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive

All intermediate crumblings, and arrive
At earth's catastrophe — 't was Este's crash
Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash
Procedure! Este's true antagonist
Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist,
All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He
'T was, leaned in the embrasure absently,
Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace
With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face
I' the dust: but as the trees waved sere, his smile
Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.
"Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer?
That we should stick together, all the year,
I kept Verona! — How old Boniface,
Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,
He by that pillar, I at this, — caught each
In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,
Egging the rabble on to disavow
Allegiance to their Marquis — Bacchus, how
They boasted! Ecelin must turn their drudge,
Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge
Paying arrears of tribute due long since —
Bacchus! My man, could promise then, nor wince,
The bones-and-muscles! sound of wind and limb,
Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him:
And now he sits me, slavering and mute,
Intent on chafing each starved purple foot
Benumbed past aching with the altar slab —
Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab

Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,
'Friedrich 's affirmed to be our side the Alps'
— Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?
Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,
God's own now? Drop the dormitory bar,
Enfold the scanty gray serge scapular
Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out —
So! but the midnight whisper turns a shout,
Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate
In the stone walls: the Past, the world you hate
Is with you, ambush, open field — or see
The surging flame — we fire Vicenza — glee!
Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe —
Bring up the Mantuans — through San Biagio — safe!
Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe
And reach us? if they block the gate — no tithe
Can pass — keep back, you Bassanese! the edge,
Use the edge — shear, thrust, hew, melt down the
wedge,
Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!
Hell — are they sprinkling fire too? the blood fries
And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear
Those upturned faces choking with despair.
Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate — 'how now?
You six had charge of her?' And then the vow
Comes, and the foam spirts, hair 's plucked, till one
shriek
(I hear it) and you fling — you cannot speak —
Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled

The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled
This morn, naked across the fire: how crown
The archer that exhausted lays you down
Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?
While one, while mine . . .
Bacchus! I think there lies
More than one corpse there" (and he paced the room)
"— Another cinder somewhere — 't was my doom
Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead
I am the same, this Azzo lives instead
Of that to me, and we pull, any how,
Este into a heap — the matter 's now
At the true juncture slipping us so oft.
Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed
His crown at such a juncture! still, if hold
Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfold
The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin
That must recoil when the best days begin!
Recoil? that 's naught; if the recoiler leaves
His name for me to fight with, no one grieves!
But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock
His cloister to become my stumbling-block
Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 't is again —
The land's inevitable Head — explain
The reverences that subject us! Count
These Ecelins now! not to say as fount,
Originating power of thought, — from twelve
That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve,
Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine

Somehow with something! *Ecelin*'s a fine
Clear name! 'T were simpler, doubtless, twine with me
At once: our cloistered friend's capacity
Was of a sort! I had to share myself
In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf
That 's forced illume in fifty points the vast
Rare vapor he 's environed by. At last
My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge
And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge
The man be crowned!
That aloe, an he durst,
Would climb! just such a bloated sprawler first
I noted in Messina's castle-court
The day I came, when Heinrich asked in sport
If I would pledge my faith to win him back
His right in Lombardy: 'for, once bid pack
Marauders,' he continued, 'in my stead
You rule, Taurello!' and upon this head
Laid the silk glove of Constance — I see her
Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
Retrude following!
I am absolved
From further toil: the empery devolved
On me, 't was Tito's word: I have to lay
For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,
Prompt nobody, and render an account
Taurello to Taurello! nay, I mount
To Friedrich — he conceives the post I kept,
Who did true service, able or inept,

Who 's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.
Me guerdoned, counsel follows; would he vie
With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface
Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race
Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point
How easy 't were to twist, once out of joint,
The socket from the bone: — my Azzo's stare
Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,
Shall — fret myself abundantly, what end
To serve? There 's left me twenty years to spend
— How better than my old way? Had I one
Who labored overthrow my work — a son
Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,
To root my pines up and then poison me,
Suppose — 't were worth while frustrate that! Beside,
Another life 's ordained me: the world's tide
Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press
Of waves, a single wave through weariness
Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?
My life must be lived out in foam and roar,
No question. Fifty years the province held
Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,
He in the midst — who leaves this quaint stone place,
These trees a year or two, then, not a trace
Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues
Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs —
To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?
— Flowers one may tease, that never grow extinct.
Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where

I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,
To overawe the aloes; and we trod
Those flowers, how call you such? — into the sod;
A stately foreigner — a world of pain
To make it thrive, arrest rough winds — all vain!
It would decline; these would not be destroyed:
And now, where is it? where can you avoid
The flowers? I frighten children twenty years
Longer! — which way, too, Ecelin appears
To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth
Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:
They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,
My fine Taurello! go you, promulgate
Friedrich's decree, and here 's shall aggrandize
Young Ecelin — your Prefect's badge! a prize
Too precious, certainly.
How now? Compete
With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat
His children? Paltry dealing! Don't I know
Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!
What 's changed — the weakness? did not I compound
For that, and undertake to keep him sound
Despite it? Here 's Taurello hankering
After a boy's preferment — this plaything
To carry, Bacchus!" And he laughed.
Remark
Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark
Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort
Fail: while these last are ever stopping short —

(So much they should — so little they can do!)
The careless tribe see nothing to pursue
If they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.
Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds
Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned,
Enough amused by fancies fairly earned
Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,
And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck, —
To his own petty but immediate doubt
If he could pacify the League without
Conceding Richard; just to this was brought
That interval of vain discursive thought!
As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit
Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot
Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black
Enormous watercourse which guides him back
To his own tribe again, where he is king;
And laughs because he guesses, numbering
The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch
Of the first lizard wrested from its couch
Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips
To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,
And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)
That he has reached its boundary, at last
May breathe; — thinks o'er enchantments of the South
Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,
Eyes, nails, and hair; but, these enchantments tried
In fancy, puts them soberly aside
For truth, projects a cool return with friends,

The likelihood of winning mere amends
Erelong; thinks that, takes comfort silently,
Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,
Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon
Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.
Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear,
Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear,
For any meagre and discolored moon
To venture forth; and such was peering soon
Above the harassed city — her close lanes
Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,
As though she shrunk into herself to keep
What little life was saved, more safely. Heap
By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside
The blackest spoke Sordello and replied
Palma with none to listen. "'T is your Cause:
What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws —
(Remember how my youth escaped! I trust
To you for manhood, Palma; tell me just
As any child) — there must be laws at work
Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk
Under the bad, — my multitude has part
In your designs, their welfare is at heart
With Salinguerra, to their interest
Refer the deeds he dwelt on, — so divest
Our conference of much that scared me. Why
Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I
Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind
This morn, a recreant to my race — mankind

O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force,
— Such force denied its object? why divorce
These, then admire my spirit's flight the same
As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame
Else quenched in the dead void, to living space?
— That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,
Why vaunt so much my unincumbered dance,
Making a feat's facilities enhance
Its marvel? But I front Taurello, one
Of happier fate, and all I should have done,
He does; the people's good being paramount
With him, their progress may perhaps account
For his abiding still: whereas you heard
The talk with Tito — the excuse preferred
For burning those five hostages, — and broached
By way of blind, as you and I approached,
I do believe."
She spoke: then he, "My thought
Plainlier expressed! All to your profit — naught
Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve
For them, of wretchedness he might relieve
While profiting your party. Azzo, too,
Supports a cause: what cause? Do Guelfs pursue
Their ends by means like yours, or better?"
When
The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed with men,
And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze
Morn broke: "Once more, Sordello, meet its gaze
Proudly — the people's charge against thee fails

In every point, while either party quails!
These are the busy ones — be silent thou!
Two parties take the world up, and allow
No third, yet have one principle, subsist
By the same injustice; whoso shall enlist
With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.
So there is one less quarrel to compose:
The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse —
I have done nothing, but both sides do worse
Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, reft
Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left
The notion of a service — ha? What lured
Me here, what mighty aim was I assured
Must move Taurello? What if there remained
A Cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained,
For me, its true discoverer?"
Some one pressed
Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
The subject for a ballad: "They must know
The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
Consul of Rome — that 's long ago for us,
Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus
In the world's corner — but too late, no doubt,
For the brave time he sought to bring about.
— Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?" Then
He cast about for terms to tell him, when
Sordello disavowed it, how they used
Whenever their Superior introduced
A novice to the Brotherhood — ("for I

Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
Appointed too," quoth he, "till Innocent
Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
My wife or my brown sleeves") — some brother spoke
Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
The edict issued, after his demise,
Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
All out except a floating power, a name
Including, tending to produce the same
Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least
Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest
And a vile stranger, — two not worth a slave
Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, — fortune gave
The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply drest
In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,
Taking the people at their word, forth stept
As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept
Rome waiting, — stood erect, and from his brain
Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,
Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, kings styled
Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled
Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem
Out of a lapful, spoil their diadem
— The Senate's cipher was so hard to scratch!
He flashes like a phanal, all men catch
The flame, Rome's just accomplished! when returned
Otho, with John, the Consul's step had spurned,
And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress
The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress

Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified
Their Consul in the Forum, and abide
E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I — (for I
Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
Appointed) — I had option to keep wife
Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife
Lose both. A song of Rome!"
And Rome, indeed,
Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,
The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
Looked an established point of light whence rays
Traversed the world; for, all the clustered homes
Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes
In their degree; the question was, how each
Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach.
Nor, of the great Two, either principle,
Struggled to change — but to possess — Rome, still,
Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.
Let Rome advance!
Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance —
How could he doubt one moment? Rome 's the Cause!
Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws —
Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo;
New structures, that inordinately glow,
Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe
By many a relic of the archetype
Extant for wonder; every upstart church
That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,
Corrected by the Theatre forlorn

That, — as a mundane shell, its world late born, —
Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,
Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind
Once more in full possession of their rights.
"Let us have Rome again! On me it lights
To build up Rome — on me, the first and last:
For such a Future was endured the Past!"
And thus, in the gray twilight, forth he sprung
To give his thought consistency among
The very People — let their facts avail
Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

MANKIND TRIUMPH OF A SUDDEN?

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk
As at the dawn? — merely a perished husk
Now, that arose a power fit to build
Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled
So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine
— A Rome indebted to no Palatine,
Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possest
Of thy wish now — rewarded for thy quest
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons —
Are this and this and this the shining ones
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say,
Your favored tenantry pursue their way
After a fashion! This companion slips
On the smooth causey, t' other blinkard trips
At his mooned sandal. "Leave to lead the brawls
Here i' the atria?" No, friend! He that sprawls
On aught but a stibadium . . what his dues
Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?
O, huddle up the day's disasters! March,
Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,
Rome!

Yet before they quite disband — a whim —
Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,

Nay, even the worst, — just house them! Any cave
Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? Brave!
They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass
Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,
And I am dead! But here 's our son excels
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells
Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes
His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both
Perdue another age. The goodly growth
Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough,
But that descendant's garb suits well enough
A portico-contriver. Speed the years —
What 's time to us? at last, a city rears
Itself! nay, enter — what 's the grave to us?
Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus
The head! Successively sewer, forum, cirque —
Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,
But now they tire the artificer upon
Blank alabaster, black obsidian,
— Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgurant,
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant
Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference betwixt
This Rome and ours — resemblance what, between
That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant sheen —
These Romans and our rabble? Use thy wit!
The work marched: step by step, — a workman fit
Took each, nor too fit, — to one task, one time, —

No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft withe,
To further loam-and-roughcast-work a stage, —
Exacts an architect, exacts an age:
No tables of the Mauritanian tree
For men whose maple-log 's their luxury!
That way was Rome built. "Better" (say you)
"merge
At once all workmen in the demiurge,
All epochs in a lifetime, every task
In one!" So should the sudden city bask
I' the day — while those we 'd feast there, want the knack
Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,
Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan,
Nor Mareotic juice from Cœcuban.
"Enough of Rome! 'T was happy to conceive
Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave
Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite
Is an old story — serves my folly right
By adding yet another to the dull
List of abortions — things proved beautiful
Could they be done, Sordello cannot do."
He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw
The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift
Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift
Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,
Mounds of all majesty. "Thou archetype,
Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!"

And then a low voice wound into his heart:
"Sordello!" (low as some old Pythoness
Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
The cause of his long error — one mistake
Of her past oracle) "Sordello, wake!
God has conceded two sights to a man —
One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,
The other, of the minute's work, man's first
Step to the plan's completeness: what 's dispersed
Save hope of that supreme step which, descried
Earliest, was meant still to remain untried
Only to give you heart to take your own
Step, and there stay — leaving the rest alone?
Where is the vanity? Why count as one
The first step, with the last step? What is gone
Except Rome's aëry magnificence,
That last step you 'd take first? — an evidence
You were God: be man now! Let those glances fall!
The basis, the beginning step of all,
Which proves you just a man — is that gone too?
Pity to disconcert one versed as you
In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent
Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,
Read the black writing — that collective man
Outstrips the individual! Who began
The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay, your own art
Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart —
Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim
Yet too plain form divides itself from him!

Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,
Woven into the echoes left erewhile
By Nina, one soft web of song: no more
Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er!
An elder poet in the younger's place —
Nina's the strength — but Alcamo's the grace:
Each neutralizes each then! Search your fill;
You get no whole and perfect Poet — still
New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's midnight
Shrouds all — or better say, the shutting light
Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
Every ideal workman — (to reject
In favor of your fearful ignorance
The thousand phantasms eager to advance,
And point you but to those within your reach) —
Were you the first who brought — (in modern speech)
The Multitude to be materialized?
That loose eternal unrest — who devised
An apparition i' the midst? The rout
Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about
That sudden flower: get round at any risk
The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk
O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign thy reign
And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne!
— The very child of over-joyousness,
Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength by stress
Of Strength comes of that forehead confident,
Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,
A calm as out of just-quelled noise; nor swerves

For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves
Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:
He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip:
Was it Sordello pried into the work
So far accomplished, and discovered lurk
A company amid the other clans,
Only distinct in priests for castellans
And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed
Its rule, their interest its interest,
Living for sake of living — there an end, —
Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend
In making adversaries or allies), —
Dived you into its capabilities
And dared create, out of that sect, a soul
Should turn the multitude, already whole,
Into its body? Speak plainer! Is 't so sure
God's church lives by a King's investiture?
Look to last step! a staggering — a shock —
What 's mere sand is demolished, while the rock
Endures: a column of black fiery dust
Blots heaven — that help was prematurely thrust
Aside, perchance! — but the air clears, naught 's erased
Of the true outline! Thus much being firm based,
The other was a scaffold. See him stand
Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand
Of the hugh brain-mask welded ply o'er ply
As in a forge; it buries either eye
White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,
The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,

As if a cloud enveloped him while fought
Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with thought
At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
The victor thought leapt radiant up, and Will,
The slave with folded arms and drooping lids
They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.
Call him no flower — a mandrake of the earth,
Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,
Rather, a fruit of suffering's excess,
Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress
Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years
Have men to wear away in smiles and tears
Between the two that nearly seem to touch,
Observe you! quit one workman and you clutch
Another, letting both their trains go by —
The actors-out of either's policy,
Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,
Carry the three Imperial crowns across,
Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold —
While Alexander, Innocent uphold
On that, each Papal key — but, link on link,
Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?
How coalesce the small and great? Alack,
For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!
Do the popes coupled there help Gregory
Alone? Hark — from the hermit Peter's cry
At Claremont, down to the first serf that says
Friedrich 's no liege of his while he delays
Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade —

Or trick of breeding strength by other aid
Than strength, is safe. Hark — from the wild harangue
Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang
Yonder! The League — or trick of turning strength
Against pernicious strength, is safe at length.
Yet hark — from Mantuan Albert making cease
The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace
Yonder! God's Truce — or trick to supersede
The very use of strength, is safe. Indeed
We trench upon the Future! Who is found
To take next step, next age — trail o'er the ground —
Shall I say, gourd-like? — not the flower's display
Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous way
O' the plant — produced by joy and sorrow, whence
Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence?
Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge? No —
E'en were Sordello ready to forego
His life for this, 't were overleaping work
Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,
Nor stray a foot's breadth from the beaten road.
Who means to help must still support the load
Hildebrand lifted — 'why hast Thou,' he groaned,
'Imposed on me a burden, Paul had moaned,
And Moses dropped beneath?' Much done — and yet
Doubtless, that grandest task God ever set
On man, left much to do: at his arm's wrench,
Charlemagne's scaffold fell; but pillars blench
Merely, start back again — perchance have been
Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,

Hammer the tenons better, and engage
A gang about your work, for the next age
Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part
By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start
Sordello on his race — would time divulge
Such secrets! If one step 's awry, one bulge
Calls for correction by a step we thought
Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,
No progress! and the scaffold in its turn
Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.
Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of life
In store, dispose you to forego the strife,
Who takes exception? Only bear in mind,
Ferrara 's reached, Goito 's left behind:
As you then were, as half yourself, desist!
— The warrior-part of you may, an it list,
Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,
Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys
By wielding such in fancy, — what is bard
Of you, may spurn the vehicle that marred
Elys so much, and in free fancy glut
His sense, yet write no verses — you have but
To please yourself for law, and once could please
What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these
Rather than doing these, in days gone by.
But all is changed the moment you descry
Mankind as half yourself, — then, fancy's trade
Ends once and always: how may half evade
The other half? men are found half of you.

Out of a thousand helps, just one or two
Can be accomplished presently: but flinch
From these (as from the faulchion, raised an inch,
Elys, described a couplet) and make proof
Of fancy, — then, while one half lolls aloof
I' the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top —
See if, for that, your other half will stop
A tear, begin a smile! The rabble's woes,
Ludicrous in their patience as they chose
To sit about their town and quietly
Be slaughtered, — the poor reckless soldiery,
With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how
'Polt-foot,' sang they, 'was in a pitfall now,'
Cheering each other from the engine-mounts, —
That crippled spawling idiot who recounts
How, lopt of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,
Till the pains crept from out him one by one,
And wriggles round the archers on his head
To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread, —
And Cino, always in the selfsame place
Weeping; beside that other wretch's case,
Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied
The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide
A double watch in the noon sun; and see
Lucchino, beauty, with the favors free,
Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and scented hair,
Campaigning it for the first time — cut there
In two already, boy enough to crawl
For latter orpine round the southern wall,

Tomà, where Richard 's kept, because that whore
Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege:
And Tiso's wife — men liked their pretty liege,
Cared for her least of whims once, — Berta, wed
A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso 's dead,
Delivering herself of his first child
On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled
To fifty gazers!" — (Here a wind below
Made moody music augural of woe
From the pine barrier) — "What if, now the scene
Draws to a close, yourself have really been
— You, plucking purples in Goito's moss
Like edges of a trabea (not to cross
Your consul-humor) or dry aloe-shafts
For fasces, at Ferrara — he, fate wafts,
This very age, her whole inheritance
Of opportunities? Yet you advance
Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,
There 's Salinguerra left you to persuade:
Fail! then" —
"No — no — which latest chance secure!"
Leapt up and cried Sordello: "this made sure,
The Past were yet redeemable; its work
Was — help the Guelfs, whom I, howe'er it irk,
Thus help!" He shook the foolish aloe-haulm
Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm
To the appointed presence. The large head
Turned on its socket; "And your spokesman," said

The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy sprout?
Few such" — (so finishing a speech no doubt
Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
— "My sober councils have diversified.
Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,
Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!"
The hesitating sunset floated back,
Rosily traversed in the wonted track
The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth
Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth
Opposite, — outlined sudden, spur to crest,
That solid Salinguerra, and caressed
Palma's contour; 't was Day looped back Night's pall;
Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech
He meant should compensate the Past and reach
Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite
To his noon's labor, so proceed till night
Leisurely! The great argument to bind
Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and mind,
— Came the consummate rhetoric to that?
Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat
Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,
Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke.
Was 't not a touching incident — so prompt
A rendering the world its just accompt,
Once proved its debtor? Who 'd suppose, before
This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,
At duty's instance could demean himself

So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?
Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,
His inmost self at the out-portion peeped
Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those
Appealed to, curious if her color rose
Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged
The need of Lombardy's becoming purged
At soonest of her barons; the poor part
Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart
And spirit in brain, unseasonably off
Elsewhere! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,
Good-humored Salinguerra, famed for tact
And tongue, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked
The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb
At his accession, — looked as all fell plumb
To purpose and himself found interest
In every point his new instructor pressed
— Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal
To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.
Then means he yield assent sure? No, alas!
All he replied was, "What, it comes to pass
That poesy, sooner than politics,
Makes fade young hair?" To think such speech could fix
Taurello!
Then a flash of bitter truth:
So fantasies could break and fritter youth
That he had long ago lost earnestness,
Lost will to work, lost power to even express
The need of working! Earth was turned a grave:

No more occasions now, though he should crave
Just one, in right of superhuman toil,
To do what was undone, repair such spoil,
Alter the Past — nothing would give the chance!
Not that he was to die: he saw askance
Protract the ignominious years beyond
To dream in — time to hope and time despond,
Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice
As saved a trouble; he might, at his choice,
One way or other, idle life out, drop
No few smooth verses by the way — for prop,
A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,
Should pick up, and set store by, — far from blame,
Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better part
Survived him. "Rather tear men out the heart
Of the truth!" — Sordello muttered, and renewed
His propositions for the Multitude.
But Salinguerra, who at this attack
Had thrown great breast and ruffling corslet back
To hear the better, smilingly resumed
His task; beneath, the carroch's warning boomed;
He must decide with Tito; courteously
He turned then, even seeming to agree
With his admonisher — "Assist the Pope,
Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope
Of the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All —
Change Secular to Evangelical" —
Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,
When sudden he looked up, laughingly almost,

To Palma: "This opinion of your friend's —
For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?
Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength" —
(Here he drew out his baldric to its length)
— "To the Pope's Knowledge — let our captive slip,
Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip
Azzo with . . . what I hold here? Who 'll subscribe
To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe
Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,
'Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust!'
— When Constance, for his couplets, would promote
Alcamo, from a parti-colored coat,
To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.
Not that I see where couplet-making jars
With common sense: at Mantua I had borne
This chanted, better than their most forlorn
Of bull-baits, — that 's indisputable!"
Brave!
Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!
All 's at an end: a Troubadour suppose
Mankind will class him with their friends or foes?
A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some special link?
Abrupt the visionary tether burst —
What were rewarded here, or what amerced
If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift
Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift

The globe, a lever like the hand and head
Of — "Men of Action," as the Jongleurs said,
— "The Great Men," in the people's dialect?
And not a moment did this scorn affect
Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,
Asking "what was," obtained a full response.
Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but
To look into his promptuary, put
Finger on a set thought in a set speech:
But was Sordello fitted thus for each
Conjecture? Nowise; since, within his soul,
Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.
A healthy spirit like a healthy frame
Craves aliment in plenty — all the same,
Changes, assimilates its aliment.
Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?
Next day no formularies more you saw
Than figs or olives in a sated maw.
'T is Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;
They lose themselves in that, means to an end,
The many old producing some one new,
A last unlike the first. If lies are true,
The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass receives
A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves
Together in his stomach rattle loose —
You find them perfect next day to produce;
But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,
Can roll an iron camel-collar flat
Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored

Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured
That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:
And round those three the people formed a ring,
Of visionary judges whose award
He recognized in full — faces that barred
Henceforth return to the old careless life,
In whose great presence, therefore, his first strife
For their sake must not be ignobly fought.
All these, for once, approved of him, he thought,
Suspended their own vengeance, chose await
The issue of this strife to reinstate
Them in the right of taking it — in fact
He must be proved king ere they could exact
Vengeance for such king's defalcation. Last,
A reason why the phrases flowed so fast
Was in his quite forgetting for a time
Himself in his amazement that the rhyme
Disguised the royalty so much: he there —
And Salinguerra — and yet unaware
Who was the lord, who liegeman!

"Thus I lay
On thine my spirit and compel obey
His lord, — my liegeman, — impotent to build
Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled
In what such builder should have been, as brook
One shame beyond the charge that I forsook
His function! Free me from that shame, I bend
A brow before, suppose new years to spend,
Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur —

Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur
At any crown he claims! That I must cede
Shamed now, my right to my especial meed —
Confess thee fitter help the world than I
Ordained its champion from eternity,
Is much: but to behold thee scorn the post
I quit in thy behalf — to hear thee boast
What makes my own despair!" And while he rung
The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,
The sad walls of the presence-chamber died
Into the distance, or embowering vied
With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;
And crowds of faces — (only keeping clear
The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground
To fight their battle from) — deep clustered round
Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,
Kind prayers for him no vapor, since, come death,
Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,
Each bone new-marrowed as whom Gods anoint
Though mortal to their rescue: now let sprawl
The snaky volumes hither! Is Typhon all
For Hercules to trample — good report
From Salinguerra only to extort?
"So was I" (closed he his inculcating,
A poet must be earth's essential king)
"So was I, royal so, and if I fail,
'T is not the royalty, ye witness quail,
But one deposed who, caring not exert
Its proper essence, trifled malapert

With accidents instead — good things assigned
As heralds of a better thing behind —
And, worthy through display of these, put forth
Never the inmost all-surpassing worth
That constitutes him King precisely since
As yet no other spirit may evince
Its like: the power he took most pride to test,
Whereby all forms of life had been professed
At pleasure, forms already on the earth,
Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth
Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.
Now, whether he came near or kept aloof
The several forms he longed to imitate,
Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.
Those forms, unalterable first as last,
Proved him her copier, not the protoplast
Of nature: what could come of being free
By action to exhibit tree for tree,
Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore
One veritable man or woman more?
Means to an end, such proofs are: what the end?
Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend —
Never contract! Already you include
The multitude; then let the multitude
Include yourself; and the result were new:
Themselves before, the multitude turn you.
This were to live and move and have, in them,
Your being, and secure a diadem
You should transmit (because no cycle yearns

Beyond itself, but on itself returns)
When, the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid
Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed
Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still
More potent than the last, of human will,
And some new King depose the old. Of such
Am I — whom pride of this elates too much?
Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;
I, with my words, hailed brother of the train
Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll back,
Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse, re-track
My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust —
Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! Then, needs must
Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer
The brawl to; — yellow-bearded Jupiter?
No! Saturn; some existence like a pact
And protest against Chaos, some first fact
I' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,
Is unavailing e'en to poorly show" . . .
(For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)
. . . " Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned —
The fullest effluence of the finest mind,
All in degree, no way diverse in kind
From minds about it, minds which, more or less
Lofty or low, move seeking to impress
Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has climbed
Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.
Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,
Is soul from body still to disengage

As tending to a freedom which rejects
Such help and incorporeally affects
The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,
Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,
Assigning them the simpler tasks it used
To patiently perform till Song produced
Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind: divest
Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed
Will dawns above us! All then is to win
Save that! How much for me, then? where begin
My work? About me, faces! and they flock,
The earnest faces! What shall I unlock
By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,
To minister: how much can mortals see
Of Life? No more than so? I take the task
And marshal you Life's elemental masque,
Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,
This light, this shade make prominent, suppress
All ordinary hues that softening blend
Such natures with the level. Apprehend
Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,
To those you doubt concerning! I enwomb
Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb;
Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph
With the black chastening river I engulph;
Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine
With languors of the planet of decline —
These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate

Between henceforth, to rightly estimate
Thus marshalled in the masque! Myself, the while,
As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile
At my own showing! Next age — what 's to do?
The men and women stationed hitherto
Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct
At soonest, in the world: light, thwarted, breaks
A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,
Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom: behold
How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage,
In presence of you all! Myself, implied
Superior now, as, by the platform's side,
I bade them do and suffer, — would last content
The world . . . no — that 's too far! I circumvent
A few, my masque contented, and to these
Offer unveil the last of mysteries —
Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play:
Once more I cast external things away,
And natures composite, so decompose
That" . . . Why, he writes *Sordello!*

"How I rose,
And how have you advanced! since evermore
Yourselves effect what I was fain before
Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,
What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.
How we attain to talk as brothers talk,

In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk
From discontinuing old aids. To-day
Takes in account the work of Yesterday:
Has not the world a Past now, its adept
Consults ere he dispense with or accept
New aids? a single touch more may enhance,
A touch less turn to insignificance
Those structures' symmetry the Past has strewed
The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude
Explicit details! 't is but brother's speech
We need, speech where an accent's change gives each
The other's soul — no speech to understand
By former audience: need was then to expand,
Expatiate — hardly were we brothers! true —
Nor I lament my small remove from you,
Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends
Accomplished turn to means: my art intends
New structure from the ancient: as they changed
The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged
The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright
As in his desert, by some simple bright
Clay cinerary pitcher — Thebes as Rome,
Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
From earth's reputed consummations razed
A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed
Above. Ah, whose that fortune? ne'ertheless
E'en he must stoop contented to express
No tithe of what 's to say — the vehicle
Never sufficient: but his work is still

For faces like the faces that select
The single service I am bound effect,
And bid me cast aside such fancies, bow
Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow
The Kaiser's coming — which with heart, soul, strength,
I labor for, this eve, who feel at length
My past career's outrageous vanity,
And would, as it amends, die, even die
Now I first estimate the boon of life,
If death might win compliance — sure, this strife
Is right for once — the People my support."
My poor Sordello! what may we extort
By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes
Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,
Began, "You love him — what you 'd say at large
Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge
To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed
You were no stranger to the course decreed.
He bids me leave his children to the saints:
As for a certain project, he acquaints
The Pope with that, and offers him the best
Of your possessions to permit the rest
Go peaceably — to Ecelin, a stripe
Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,
— To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
Clutches already; extricate, who can,
Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
Cartiglione, Loria! — all go,
And with them go my hopes. 'T is lost, then! Lost

This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost
Procuring; thirty years — as good I 'd spent
Like our admonisher! But each his bent
Pursues: no question, one might live absurd
One's self this while, by deed as he by word,
Persisting to obtrude an influence where
'T is made account of, much as . . . nay, you fare
With twice the fortune, youngster! — I submit,
Happy to parallel my waste of wit
With the renowned Sordello's: you decide
A course for me. Romano may abide
Romano, — Bacchus! After all, what dearth
Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?
Say there 's a prize in prospect, must disgrace
Betide competitors, unless they style
Themselves Romano? were it worth my while
To try my own luck! But an obscure place
Suits me — there wants a youth to bustle, stalk
And attitudinize — some fight, more talk,
Most flaunting badges — how, I might make clear,
Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here
— Here, pity they are like to lie! For me,
With station fixed unceremoniously
Long since, small use contesting; I am but
The liegeman, you are born the lieges — shut
That gentle mouth now! or resume your kin
In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin
For me to work with! Could that neck endure
This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,

She should . . . or might one bear it for her? Stay —
I have not been so flattered many a day
As by your pale friend — Bacchus! The least help
Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp —
His neck is broad enough — a ready tongue
Beside — too writhled — but, the main thing, young —
I could . . . why, look ye!"
And the badge was thrown
Across Sordello's neck: "This badge alone
Makes you Romano's Head — becomes superb
On your bare neck, which would, on mine, disturb
The pauldron," said Taurello. A mad act,
Not even dreamed about before — in fact,
Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce —
But he had dallied overmuch, this once,
With power: the thing was done, and he, aware
The thing was done, proceeded to declare —
(So like a nature made to serve, excel
In serving, only feel by service well!)
— That he would make Sordello that and more.
"As good a scheme as any! What 's to pore
At in my face?" he asked — ponder instead
This piece of news; you are Romano's Head!
One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,
Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
This time! For you there 's Palma to espouse —
For me, one crowning trouble ere I house
Like my compeer."
On which ensued a strange

And solemn visitation; there came change
O'er every one of them; each looked on each:
Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.
And when the giddiness sank and the haze
Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire
Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire
Momently; and, interpreting the thrill
Nigh at its ebb, Palma was found there still
Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed
A year ago, while dying on her breast, —
Of a contrivance that Vicenza night,
When Ecelin had birth. "Their convoy's flight,
Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame
That wallowed like a dragon at his game
The toppling city through — San Biagio rocks!
And wounded lies in her delicious locks
Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,
None of her wasted, just in one embrace
Covering her child: when, as they lifted her,
Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier
And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,
Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke
Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward — drown
His colleague Ecelin's clamor, up and down
The disarray: failed Adelaide see then
Who was the natural chief, the man of men?
Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,
Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe

From wandering after his heritage
Lost once and lost for aye — and why that rage.
That deprecating glance? A new shape leant
On a familiar shape — gloatingly bent
O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,
Still one outflamed the rest — her child's before
'T was Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate
Rage, startled her from Ecelin — too late!
Then was the moment! rival's foot had spurned
Never that brow to earth! Ere sense returned —
The act conceived, adventured, and complete,
They bore away to an obscure retreat
Mother and child — Retrude's self not slain"
(Nor even here Taurello moved) "though pain
Was fled; and what assured them most 't was fled,
All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head
'T would turn this way and that, waver awhile,
And only settle into its old smile —
(Graceful as the disquieted water-flag
Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag
On either side their path) — when suffered look
Down on her child. They marched: no sign once shook
The company's close litter of crossed spears
Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears
Slipt in the sunset from her long black lash,
And she was gone. So far the action rash —
No crime. They laid Retrude in the font,
Taurello's very gift, her child was wont
To sit beneath — constant as eve he came

To sit by its attendant girls the same
As one of them. For Palma, she would blend
With this magnific spirit to the end,
That ruled her first — but scarcely had she dared
To disobey the Adelaide who scared
Her into vowing never to disclose
A secret to her husband, which so froze
His blood at half recital, she contrived
To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,
Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar
Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,
Palma received that action: she was told
Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold
Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free
To impart the secret to Romano, she
Engaged to repossess Sordello of
His heritage, and hers, and that way doff
The mask, but after years, long years! — while now,
Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow?"
Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked:
And when he did speak 't was as if he mocked
The minstrel, "who had not to move," he said,
"Not stir — should Fate defraud him of a shred
Of his son's infancy? much less of his youth!"
(Laughingly all this) — "which to aid, in truth,
Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown
Old, not too old — 't was best they kept alone
Till now, and never idly met till now";
— Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how

All intimations of this eve's event
Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,
Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,
Tumble the Church down, institute a-top
The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy:
— "That 's now! — no prophesying what may be
Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,
Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime
At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide
On whom . . ."
"Embrace him, madman!" Palma cried,
Who through the laugh saw sweatdrops burst apace,
And his lips' blanching: he did not embrace
Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.
Understand,
This while Sordello was becoming flushed
Out of his whiteness: thoughts rushed, fancies rushed;
He pressed his hand upon his head and signed
Both should forbear him. "Nay, the best 's behind!"
Taurello laughed, — not quite with the same laugh:
"The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like chaff
These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils
From: nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils
Our triumph! — Friedrich? Think you, I intend
Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend
And brain I waste? Think you, the people clap
Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap
For any Friedrich to fill up? 'T is mine —

That 's yours: I tell you, towards some such design
Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,
And for another, yes — but worked no less
With instinct at my heart; I else had swerved,
While now — look round! My cunning has preserved
Samminiato — that 's a central place
Secures us Florence, boy, — in Pisa's case,
By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours,
And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours
The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed —
Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first
That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in the March;
On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,
Romagna and Bologna, whose first span
Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan;
Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano 's sure!" . . .
So he proceeded: half of all this, pure
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,
But what was undone he felt sure to do,
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play —
Need of the sword now! That would soon adjust
Aught wrong at present; to the sword intrust
Sordello's whiteness, undersize: 't was plain
He hardly rendered right to his own brain —
Like a brave hound, men educate to pride
Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,
As though he could not, gift by gift, match men!
Palma had listened patiently: but when

'T was time expostulate, attempt withdraw
Taurello from his child, she, without awe
Took off his iron arms from, one by one,
Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,
Made him avert his visage and relieve
Sordello (you might see his corselet heave
The while) who, loose, rose — tried to speak, then sank:
They left him in the chamber. All was blank.
And even reeling down the narrow stair
Taurello kept up, as though unaware
Palma was by to guide him, the old device
— Something of Milan — "how we muster thrice
The Torriani's strength there — all along
Our own Visconti cowed them" — thus the song
Continued even while she bade him stoop,
Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,
The turnings to the gallery below,
Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.
When he had sat in silence long enough
Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff
She stopt the truncheon; only to commence
One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
For speaking, some poor rhyme of "Elys' hair
And head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,
So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks
Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
Sun-blanched the livelong Summer" — from his worst
Performance, the Goito, as his first:
And that at end, conceiving from the brow

And open mouth no silence would serve now,
Went on to say the whole world loved that man
And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,
Eclipsed the Count's — he sucking in each phrase
As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise
Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made
Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,
A crown, an aureole: there must she remain
(Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain
As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)
To get the best look at, in fittest niche
Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,
— "Lauded her father for his treason now,"
He told her, "only, how could one suspect
The wit in him? — whose clansman, recollect,
Was ever Salinguerra — she, the same,
Romano and his lady — so, might claim
To know all, as she should" — and thus begun
Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, "not one
Fit to be told that foolish boy," he said,
"But only let Sordello Palma wed,
— Then!"
'T was a dim long narrow place at best:
Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,
As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb —
A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
Faced Palma — but at length Taurello set
Her free; the grating held one ragged jet
Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within

The hollow underneath — how else begin
Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew
The ages than with Palma plain in view?
Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,
Pursuing his discourse; a grand unchecked
Monotony made out from his quick talk
And the recurring noises of his walk;
— Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent
Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,
Who hearten each the other against heart —
Boasting there 's naught to care for, when, apart
The boaster, all 's to care for. He, beside
Some shape not visible, in power and pride
Approached, out of the dark, ginglingly near,
Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear
Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,
Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,
And on he strode into the opposite dark
Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark
I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed thong
That crashed against the angle aye so long
After the last, punctual to an amount
Of mailed great paces you could not but count, —
Prepared you for the pacing back again
And by the snatches you might ascertain
That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left
By this alone in Italy, they cleft
Asunder, crushed together, at command
Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,

Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne —
But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, "if we deign
Accept that compromise and stoop to give
Rome law, the Cæsars' Representative."
— Enough, that the illimitable flood
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood
In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed
Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed
Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,
He found 't was looked for that a whole life's braves
Should somehow be made good — so, weak and worn,
Must stagger up at Milan, one gray morn
Of the To-Come, and fight his latest fight.
But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height —
He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,
A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if
He had our very Italy to keep
Or cast away, or gather in a heap
To garrison the better — ay, his word
Was, "run the cucumber into a gourd,
Drive Trent upon Apulia" — at their pitch
Who spied the continents and islands which
Grew mulberry-leaves and sickles, in the map —
(Strange that three such confessions so should hap
To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear
Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere, —
Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask
Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her task
Was done, the labor of it — for, success,

Concerned not Palma, passion's votaries)
Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned —
Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bids
With large involuntary asking lids,
Palma interpret. "'T is his own foot-stamp —
Your hand! His summons! Nay, this idle damp
Befits not!" Out they two reeled dizzily.
"Visconti 's strong at Milan," resumed he,
In the old, somewhat insignificant way —
(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)
As though the spirit's flight, sustained thus far,
Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are —
Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,
Ecelin, — only Naddo 's never gone!
— Labors, this moonrise, what the Master meant
"Is Squarcialupo speckled? — purulent,
I 'd say, but when was Providence put out?
He carries somehow handily about
His spite nor fouls himself!" Goito's vines
Stand like a cheat detected — stark rough lines,
The moon breaks through, a gray mean scale against
The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st
Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed — who can tell?
As Heaven, now all 's at end, did not so well,
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave
Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.
While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait
No longer — these in compass, forward fate!

BOOK THE SIXTH.

AT THE CLOSE OF A DAY OR A LIFE,

The thought of Eglamor 's least like a thought,
And yet a false one, was, " Man shrinks to naught
If matched with symbols of immensity —
Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky
Or sea, too little for their quietude ":
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow sank
Down the near terrace to the farther bank,
And only one spot left out of the night
Glimmered upon the river opposite —
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
And star for star, one richness where they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendors folded in
To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din
(Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip
Who lets some first and eager purpose slip
In a new fancy's birth; the speech keeps on
Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)
— Aroused him, — surely offered succor. Fate
Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate
Herself, — put off strange after-thoughts awhile,
That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile, —

What help to pierce the Future as the Past,
Lay in the plaining city?
And at last
The main discovery and prime concern,
All that just now imported him to learn,
His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete
Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet,
Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked,
Some other — which of these could he suspect,
Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
The real way seemed made up of all the ways —
Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
Demanding only outward influence,
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
Power to uplift his power, — this moon's control,
Over the sea-depths, — and their mass had swept
Onward from the beginning and still kept
Its course: but years and years the sky above
Held none, and so, untasked of any love,
His sensitiveness idled, now amort,
Alive now, and to sullenness or sport
Given wholly up, disposed itself anew
At every passing instigation, grew
And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,
Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt

Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race
Of whitest ripples o'er the reef — found place
For much display; not gathered up and, hurled
Right from its heart, encompassing the world.
So had Sordello been, by consequence,
Without a function: others made pretence
To strength not half his own, yet had some core
Within, submitted to some moon, before
Them still, superior still whate'er their force, —
Were able therefore to fulfil a course,
Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.
To each who lives must be a certain fruit
Of having lived in his degree, — a stage,
Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,
To stop at; and to this the spirits tend
Who, still discovering beauty without end,
Amass the scintillations, make one star
— Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar, —
And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest
By winning it to notice and invest
Their souls with alien glory, some one day
Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,
Round to the perfect circle — soon or late,
According as themselves are formed to wait;
Whether mere human beauty will suffice
— The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,
Or human intellect seem best, or each
Combine in some ideal form past reach
On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,

Some love, hate even, take their place, the same,
And may be served — all this they do not lose,
Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose
What must be Hell — a progress thus pursued
Through all existence, still above the food
That 's offered them, still towering beyond
The widened range, in virtue of their bond
Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,
A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove
To swaying all Sordello: wherefore doubt,
That Love meet for such Strength, some moon without
Would match his sea? — or fear, Good manifest,
Only the Best breaks faith? — Ah, but the Best
Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
And is not! crave we gems? no penury
Of their material round us! pliant earth,
The plastic flame — what balks the mage his birth
— Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the block?
Flinders enrich the strand, and veins the rock —
Naught more! Ask creatures? Life 's i' the tempest,
Thought
Clothes the keen hill-top, midday woods are fraught
With fervors: ah, these forms are well enough!
But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
Profuse at Nature's pleasure, men beyond
These men! and thus, perchance, are over-fond
In arguing, from Good the Best, from force
Divided — force combined, an ocean's course
From this our sea whose mere intestine pants

Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.
— External Power? If none be adequate
And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)
A law to his own sphere? — need to remove
All incompleteness, for that law, that love?
Nay, if all other laws be such, though veiled
In mercy to each vision that had failed
If unassisted by its want, — for lure,
Embodied? Stronger vision could endure
The unbodied want: no bauble for a truth!
The People were himself; and, by the ruth
At their condition, was he less impelled
To alter the discrepancy beheld,
Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part
Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,
Then palmed on him as alien woe — the Guelf
To succor, proud that he forsook himself?
No! All's himself; all service, therefore, rates
Alike, nor serving one part, immolates
The rest: but all in time! "That lance of yours
Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,
That buckler's lined with many a giant's beard
Ere long, O champion, be the lance upreared,
The buckler wielded handsomely as now!
But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,
Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,
And, if you hope we struggle through the flat,
Put lance and buckler by! Next half-month lacks
Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe

To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear
Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,
Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled, we 'll try
The picturesque achievements by and by —
Next life!"
Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
Your claims! — for thus he ventured, to the verge,
Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust
Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
Likewise: accordingly the Crowd — as yet
He had inconsciously contrived forget
I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . . one might assuage
The signal horrors easier than engage
With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief
Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief
In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,
But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work
To correspond . . . this Crowd then, forth they stood.
"And now content thy stronger vision, brood
On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by turf,
Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf!"
Down sank the People's Then; uprose their Now.
These sad ones render service to! And how
Piteously little must that service prove
— Had surely proved in any case! for, move
Each other obstacle away, let youth
Have been aware it had surprised a truth
'T were service to impart — can truth be seized,

Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,
Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit
So happily, no gesture luring it,
The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,
Most vain! a life 's to spend ere this he chain,
To the poor crowd's complacence; ere the crowd
Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud
Its kin of twice the plume — which he, in turn,
If he shall live as many lives, may learn
How to secure — not else. Then Mantua called
Back to his mind how certain bards were thralled
— Buds blasted, but of breath more like perfume
Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion bloom:
Some insane rose that burnt heart out in sweets,
A spendthrift in the Spring, no Summer greets —
Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,
Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.
"Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence
With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence
Must truth be casual truth, elicited
In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread
So rarely, that 't is like at no one time
Of the world's story has not truth, the prime
Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled
The world's course right, been really in the world
— Content the while with some mean spark by dint
Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream
Sky-ward!"

Sordello's miserable gleam
Was looked for at the moment: he would dash
This badge, and all it brought, to earth, — abash
Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest
The Kaiser from his purpose, — would attest
His own belief, in any case. Before
He dashes it, however, think once more!
For, were that little, truly service? "Ay —
I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy
Its ultimate effect, but many flaws
Of vision blur each intervening cause.
Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum
Of service, Now as filled as the To-come
With evidence of good — nor too minute
A share to vie with evil! No dispute,
'T were fitliest maintain the Guelfs in rule:
That makes your life's work: but you have to school
Your day's work on these natures circumstanced
Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced
Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved
Now, for the Then's sake, — hating what you loved,
Loving old hatreds! nor if one man bore
Brand upon temples while his fellow wore
The aureole, would it task you to decide —
But, portioned duly out, the Future vied
Never with the unparcelled Present! Smite
Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?
The Present's complete sympathies to break,
Aversions bear with, for a Future's sake

So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,
The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?
This were work, true — but work performed at cost
Of other work — aught gained here, elsewhere lost.
For a new segment spoil an orb half done?
Rise with the People one step, and sink — one?
Were it but one step — less than the whole face
Of things, your novel duty bids erase!
Harms to abolish! what? the prophet saith,
The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith,
Old courage, only born because of harms,
Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms?
Flame may persist but is not glare as stanch?
Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch —
Blood dries to crimson — Evil 's beautified
In every shape. Thrust Beauty then aside
And banish Evil! wherefore? After all,
Is Evil a result less natural
Than Good? For, overlook the seasons' strife
With tree and flower, — the hideous animal life,
(Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt
For his solution, and endure the vaunt
Of nature's angel, as a child that knows
Himself befooled, unable to propose
Aught better than the fooling) — and but care
For Men, for the mere People then and there, —
In these, could you but see that Good and Ill
Claimed you alike! Whence rose their claim but still
From Ill, as fruit of Ill — what else could knit

You theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it
Were also free from you! Whose happiness
Could be distinguished in this morning's press
Of miseries? — the fool's who passed a gibe
'On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy tribe,
Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in
Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin!' —
Much hold on you that fool obtained! Nay mount
Yet higher — and upon men's own account
Must Evil stay: for, what is Joy? — to heave
Up one obstruction more, and common leave
What was peculiar — by such act destroy
Itself; a partial death is every joy;
The sensible escape, enfranchisement
Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed — content,
The cramped — at large, the growing circle — round,
All 's to begin again — some novel bound
To break, some new enlargement to entreat,
The sphere though larger is not more complete.
Now for Mankind's experience: who alone
Might style the unobstructed world his own?
Whom palled Goito with its perfect things?
Sordello's self! whereas for mankind springs
Salvation by each hindrance interposed;
They climb, life's view is not at once disclosed
To creatures caught up, on its summit left,
Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft —
But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot,
While, range on range, the girdling forests shoot

'Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who scale
Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,
Heartened with each discovery; in their soul,
The Whole they seek by Parts — but, found that Whole,
Could they revert, enjoy past gains? The space
Of time you judge so meagre to embrace
The Parts, were more than plenty, once attained
The Whole, to quite exhaust it: naught were gained
But leave to look — not leave to do: Beneath
Soon sates the looker — look Above, and Death
Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live
First, and die soon enough, Sordello! Give
Body and spirit the first right they claim,
And pasture thee on a voluptuous shame
That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,
Art neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men —
Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck
Thine attributes away for sordid muck,
Yet manage from that very muck educe
Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to thy cruce
The world's discardings! Though real ingots pay
Thy pains, the clods that yielded them are clay
To all save thee, — would clay remain, though quenched
Thy purging-fire; who 's robbed then? Had you wrenched
An ampler treasure forth! — As 't is, they crave
A share that ruins you and will not save
Them. Why should sympathy command you quit
The course that makes your joy, nor will remit

Their woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse
The order (time instructs you) nor coerce
Each unit till, some predetermined mode,
The total be emancipate; men's road
Is one, men's times of travel many; thwart
No enterprising soul's precocious start
Before the general march! if slow or fast
All straggle up to the same point at last,
Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,
The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,
While they were landlocked? Speed there Then, but how
This badge would suffer you improve your Now!'"
His time of action for, against, or with
Our world (I labor to extract the pith
Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,
Gigantic with its power of joy, beside
The world's eternity of impotence .
To profit though at his whole joy's expense.
"Make nothing of my day because so brief?
Rather make more — instead of joy, use grief
Before its novelty have time subside!
Wait not for the late savour — leave untried
Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze
Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
Of life! — together let wrath, hatred, lust,
All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
Upon this Now, which time may reason out
As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt —
But long ere then Sordello will have slipt

Away — you teach him at Goito's crypt,
There 's a blank issue to that fiery thrill!
Stirring, the few cope with the many, still:
So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass
Unable to produce three tufts of grass,
Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void
The whole calm glebe's endeavor: be employed!
And e'en though somewhat smart the Crowd for this,
Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,
'T is but one pang — one blood-drop to the bowl
Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl
At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,
And, kindling orbs gray as the unripe grape
Before, avails forthwith to disentrance
The portent — soon to lead a mystic dance
Among you! For, who sits alone in Rome?
Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,
And set me there to live? O life, life-breath,
Life-blood, — ere sleep, come travail, life ere death!
This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,
But always streaming! Hindrances? They pique —
Helps? such . . . but why repeat, my soul o'ertops
Each height, than every depth profoundlier drops?
Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait
For some transcendent life reserved by Fate
To follow this? O, never! Fate, I trust
The same, my soul to; for, as who flings dust,
Perchance — so facile was the deed, she checked
The void with these materials to affect

My soul diversely — these consigned anew
To naught by death, what marvel if she threw
A second and superber spectacle
Before it? What may serve for sun — what still
Wander a moon above me — what else wind
About me like the pleasures left behind,
And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh
Cling to me? what 's new laughter — soothes the fresh
Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for my sake
In brave resource, but whether bids she slake
My thirst at this first rivulet, or count
No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount
Above i' the clouds, while here she 's provident
Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent
Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail
The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail
At bottom. O, 't were too absurd to slight
For the hereafter the to-day's delight!
Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring — wear
Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!
Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart
Offer to serve, contented for my part
To give life up in service, — only grant
That I do serve; if otherwise, why want
Aught further of me? If men cannot choose
But set aside life, why should I refuse
The gift? I take it — I, for one, engage
Never to falter through my pilgrimage —
Nor end it howling that the stock or stone

Were enviable, truly: I, for one,
Will praise the world, you style mere anteroom
To the palace — be it so! shall I assume
— My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,
My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope
One moment? What — with guarders row on row,
Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,
Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,
Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for, — laugh
At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff
'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder, — why,
Admitted to the presence by and by,
Should thought of having lost these make me grieve
Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave?
— Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,
Are floor-work here! — But did I let alone
That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule
Once and forever? — Floor-work? No such fool!
Rather, were heaven to forestall earth, I 'd say
I, is it, must be blessed? Then, my own way
Bless me! give firmer arm and fleeter foot,
I 'll thank you: but to no mad wings transmute
These limbs of mine — our greensward was so soft!
Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft:
We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus
Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.
Better move palpably through heaven — nor, freed
Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space proceed

'Mid flying synods of worlds! No! In heaven's marge
Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe
Solid with stars — the Centaur at his game,
Made tremulously out in hoary flame!
Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull
Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,
Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed
So oft a better life this life concealed,
And which sage, champion, martyr, through each path
Have hunted fearlessly — the horrid bath,
The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.
— 'T was well for them; let me become aware
As they, and I relinquish life, too! Let
What masters life disclose itself! Forget
Vain ordinances, I have one appeal —
I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel
— So much is truth to me. What Is, then? Since
One object, viewed diversely, may evince
Beauty and ugliness — this way attract,
That way repel, why gloze upon the fact?
Why must a single of the sides be right?
What bids choose this and leave the opposite?
Where 's abstract Right for me? — in youth endued
With Right still present, still to be pursued,
Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
Each with its proper law and mode of life,
Each to be dwelt at ease in: where, to sway
Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,

Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start
Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout
That some should pick the unstrung jewels out —
Each, well!"
And, as in moments when the Past
Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
Himself quite through mere secondary states
Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,
Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove, glade,
And on into the very nucleus probe
That first determined there exist a globe.
As that were easiest, half the globe dissolved,
So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved
By his flesh-half's break up — the sudden swell
Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,
Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
Eternity, as Time — as Matter — Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
Their attributes within a Life: thus girt
With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct
Quite otherwise — with Good and Ill distinct,
Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result —
Contrived to render easy, difficult,

This or the other course of . . . what new bond
In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond
Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good
To its arrangements. Once this understood,
As suddenly he felt himself alone,
Quite out of Time and this world: all was known.
What made the secret of his past despair?
— Most imminent when he seemed most aware
Of his own self-sufficiency; made mad
By craving to expand the power he had,
And not new power to be expanded? — just
This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust,
Joy comes when so much Soul is wreaked in Time
On Matter, — let the Soul's attempt sublime
Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent
By more or less that deed's accomplishment,
And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?
Let the employer match the thing employed,
Fit to the finite his infinity,
And thus proceed forever, in degree
Changed but in kind the same, still limited
To the appointed circumstance and dead
To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere —
Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here —
Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
Are like: now, of the present sphere we call
Life, are conditions — take but this among
Many; the body was to be so long
Youthful, no longer — but, since no control

Tied to that body's purposes his soul,
She chose to understand the body's trade
More than the body's self — had fain conveyed
Her boundless, to the body's bounded lot:
Hence, the soul permanent, the body not, —
Scarce the one minute for enjoying here,
The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,
Run o'er its capabilities and wring
A joy thence, the held worth experiencing —
Which, far from half discovered even, — lo,
The minute gone, the body's power let go
That 's portioned to that joy's acquirement! Broke
Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it woke —
From the volcano's vapor-flag, winds hoist
Black o'er the spread of sea, — down to the moist
Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,
Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again —
(The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great
To the soul's absoluteness) — meditate
Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord
And the whole music it was framed afford, —
The chord's might half discovered, what should pluck
One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.
And then no marvel if the spirit, shone
A saddest sight — the body lost alone
Through her officious proffered help, deprived
Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,
Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence, —
Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,

To stem the ruin even yet, protract
The body's term, supply the power it lacked
From her infinity, compel it learn
These qualities were only Time's concern,
And body may, with spirit helping, barred —
Advance the same, vanquished — obtain reward,
Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,
Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good below.
And the result is, the poor body soon
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,
Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.
So much was plain then, proper in the Past;
To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres — Eternity, his soul
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each
Single sphere — Time. But does our knowledge reach
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar
Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
Though during the mere space that shall elapse
'Twixt his enthralment in new bonds, perhaps?
Must life be ever just escaped, which should
Have been enjoyed? — nay, might have been and would,
Each purpose ordered right — the soul 's no whit
Beyond the body's purpose under it —
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,
And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
And star for star, one richness where they mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendors folded in
To die — would soul, proportioned thus, begin
Exciting discontent, or surelier quell
The body if, aspiring, it rebel?
But how so order life? Still brutalize
The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes
To all that was before, all that shall be
After this sphere — and every quality
Save some sole and immutable Great and Good
And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood
To follow? Never may some soul see All
— The Great Before and After, and the Small
Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,
And take the single course prescribed before,
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?
But where descry the Love that shall select
That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,
Nature has plied with all her means — from trees
And flowers — e'en to the Multitude! — and these,
Decides he save or no? One word to end!"
Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
And speak for you. Of a Power above you still
Which, utterly incomprehensible,
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man —
What need! And of — none the minutest duct
To that out-nature, naught that would instruct

And so let rivalry begin to live —
But of a Power its representative
Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim
A course, the first chose and this last revealed —
This Human clear, as that Divine concealed —
What utter need!
What has Sordello found?
Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
End where poor Eglamor begun? as says
Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
About the world: where, in the midst, they met,
Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set
Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found?
For they approach — approach — that foot's rebound.
Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil
Aside — and you divine who sat there dead,
Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,
A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies
Help from above in his extreme despair,
And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there
With short, quick, passionate cry: as Palma prest
In one great kiss her lips upon his breast
It beat. By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
His day's toil at Goito: the new-cropped
Dead vine-leaf answers, now 't is eve, he bit,
Twirled so, and filed all day: the mansion 's fit,

God counselled for. As easy guess the word
That passed betwixt them and become the third
To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
Him with one fault — so, no remembrance racks
Of the stone maidens and the font of stone
He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone.
Alas, my friend — alas Sordello, whom
Anon they laid within that old font-tomb —
And, yet again, alas!
And now is 't worth
Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth
How Salinguerra extricates himself
Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf
May fight their fiercest out? If Richard sulked
In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,
Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,
Was peace; our chief made some frank overture
That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast
On its disposer, and Taurello passed
With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,
Nine days at least. Then, — fairly reached the goal, —
He, by one effort, blotted the great hope
Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope
With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent
Away the Legate and the League, content
No blame at least the brothers had incurred,
— Despatched a message to the Monk, he heard
Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat

And ne'er spoke more, — informed the Ferrarese
He but retained their rule so long as these
Lingered in pupilage, — and last, no mode
Apparent else of keeping safe the road
From Germany direct to Lombardy
For Friedrich, — none, that is, to guarantee
The faith and promptitude of who should next
Obtain Sofia's dowry, — sore perplexed —
(Sofia being youngest of the tribe
Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe
The envious magnates with — nor, since he sent
Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent
Once failed the Kaiser's purposes — "we lost
Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post —
Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock?")
Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock
In pure necessity, and so destroyed
His slender last of chances, quite made void
Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes
Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,
Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed
He up this evening's work that, when 't was brushed
Somehow against by a blind chronicle
Which, chronicling whatever woe befell
Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe
Of "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo
Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,"
The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire
Which of Sofia's five was meant.

The chaps
Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,
Obliterated not the beautiful
Distinctive features at a crash — but dull
And duller, next year, as Guelf chiefs withdrew
Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too
Ecelin at Campese slept — close by,
Who likes may see him in Solagna lie
With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote
The cavalier he was) — then his heart smote
Young Ecelin at last! — long since adult,
And, save Vicenza's business, what result
In blood and blaze? ('t was hard to intercept
Sordello till his plain withdrawal.) Stept,
Then, its new lord on Lombardy. I' the nick
Of time when Ecelin and Alberic
Closed with Taurello, come precisely news
That in Verona half the souls refuse
Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count —
Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,
Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.
Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth
Was wholly his — Taurello sinking back
From temporary station to a track
That suited. News received of this acquist,
Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who missed
Taurello then? Another year: they took
Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook
For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three

Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves "the Free,"
Opposing Alberic, — vile Bassanese, —
(Without Sordello!) — Ecelin at ease
Slaughtered them so observably, that oft
A little Salinguerra looked with soft
Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age
To get appointed his proud uncle's page.
More years passed, and that sire had dwindled down
To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown
Better through age, his parts still in repute,
Subtle — how else? — but hardly so astute
As his contemporaneous friends professed;
Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,
Known by each neighbor, and allowed for, let
Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear — "trap
The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap
A battered pinion" — was the word. In fine,
One flap too much and Venice's marine
Was meddled with; no overlooking that!
She captured him in his Ferrara, fat
And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
Than force, to speak the truth; there 's slender laud
Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
To pull his death on such a man — fate shears
The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads
You fritter: so, presiding his board-head,
The old smile, your assurance all went well
With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)

In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,
Made some pretence at fighting, some amends
For the shame done his eighty years — (apart
The principle, none found it in his heart
To be much angry with Taurello) — gained
Their galleys with the prize, and what remained
But carry him to Venice for a show?
— Set him, as 't were, down gently — free to go
His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe
The swallows soaring their eternal curve
'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens
Gathered importunately, fives and tens,
To point their children the Magnifico,
All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
His gait among them now — "it took, indeed,
Fully this Ecelin to supersede
That man," remarked the seniors. Singular!
Sordello's inability to bar
Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought
About by his strange disbelief that aught
Was ever to be done, — this thrust the Twain
Under Taurello's tutelage, — whom, brain
And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod
Indissolubly bound to baffle God
Who loves the world — and thus allowed the thin
Gray wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic
(Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick
To demonstration — prove wherever 's will

To do, there 's plenty to be done, or ill
Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip —
Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,
They plagued the world: a touch of Hildebrand
(So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band
Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,
And saving Milan win the world's applause.
Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew
Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù
By San Zenon where Alberic in turn
Saw his exasperated captors burn
Seven children and their mother; then, regaled
So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed
To death through raunce and bramble-bush. I take
God's part and testify that mid the brake
Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,
You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll —
The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat
The modern church beneath, — no harm in that!
Cherups the contumacious grasshopper,
Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre
Above the ravage: there, at deep of day
A week since, heard I the old Canon say
He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst
And Alberic's huge skeleton unhearsed
Only five years ago. He added, "June 's
The month for carding off our first cocoons
The silkworms fabricate" — a double news,
Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose!

And Naddo gone, all 's gone; not Eglamor!
Believe, I knew the face I waited for,
A guest my spirit of the golden courts!
O strange to see how, despite ill-reports,
Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained
Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned,
And still my spirit held an upward flight,
Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light
More and more gorgeous — ever that face there
The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care
As perfect triumph were not sure for all,
But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,
— A transient struggle, haply a painful sense
Of the inferior nature's clinging — whence
Slight starting tears easily wiped away,
Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
Of irrepressible admiration — not
Aspiring, all considered, to their lot
Who ever, just as they prepare ascend
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,
That upturned fervid face and hair put back!
Is there no more to say? He of the rhymes —
Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,
Was born: Sordello die at once for men?
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen
Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved
Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved —
Who thus, by fortune's ordering events,

Passed with posterity, to all intents.
For just the God he never could become.
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb
In praise of him: while what he should have been,
Could be, and was not — the one step too mean
For him to take, — we suffer at this day
Because of: Ecelin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake:
He did much — but Sordello's chance was gone.
Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed — 't was a fit
He wished should go to him, not he to it
— As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed
Really at home — one who was chiefly glad
To have achieved the few real deeds he had,
Because that way assured they were not worth
Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth —
A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes
Never itself, itself: had he embraced
Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit
And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot
All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
Such life is, after all! cannot I say
He lived for some one better thing? this way. —
Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,

Morning just up, higher and higher runs
A child barefoot and rosy. She! the sun 's
On the square castle's inner-court's low wall
Like the chine of some extinct animal
Half turned to earth and flowers; and through the haze
(Save where some slender patches of gray maize
Are to be overleaped) that boy has crost
The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost
Matting the balm and mountain camomile.
Up and up goes he, singing all the while
Some unintelligible words to beat
The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,
So worsted is he at "the few fine locks
Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
Sunblanched the livelong summer," — all that 's left
Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft,
Sleep and forget, Sordello! In effect
He sleeps, the feverish poet — I suspect
Not utterly companionless; but, friends,
Wake up; the ghost 's gone, and the story ends
I 'd fain hope, sweetly — seeing, peri or ghoul,
That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,
Evil or good, judicious authors think,
According as they vanish in a stink
Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank! ye snuff
Civet, I warrant. Really? Like enough!
Merely the savour's rareness; any nose
May ravage with impunity a rose:

Rifle a musk-pod and 't will ache like yours!
I 'd tell you that same pungency insures
An after-gust — but that were overbold.
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

RETURN TO ⟶ CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
202 Main Library

LOAN PERIOD 1 HOME USE	2	3
4	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
RENEWALS AND RECHARGES MAY BE MADE 4 DAYS PRIOR TO DUE DATE.
LOAN PERIODS ARE 1-MONTH, 3-MONTHS, AND 1-YEAR.
RENEWALS: CALL (415) 642-3405

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

RECEIVED
MAR 05 1990
CIRCULATION DEPT.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
FORM NO. DD6, 60m, 1/83 BERKELEY, CA 94720

GENERAL LIBRARY - U.C. BERKELEY

B000330739

VERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA